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Jesus Christ, the Revelation of God.

A SERMON

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[Who being] the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, [and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.]—Hebrews 1: 3.

THE discourse of the author of this epistle institutes a parallel, and sets forth a contrast, between the revelation of God in connection with the mission of the ancient prophets and the manifestation of God in the last times in the person and by the ministry of His Son. It maintains that both, proceeding from the same source and tending to the same end, are in substantial agreement, and yet abundantly shows that the latter surpasses the former in the fullness of its substance and the excellence of its form. The first was the shadow, the second the reality; the one was the illustration, the other the fact.

The grandeur of the latter discovery of God was derived from two views of a person. This person was not only a revealer, as all prophets were revealers of God, but he was in himself the revelation of God. The prophets spake concerning God and a coming Messiah. He spake concerning God and himself. Rather, he also spake of God when he spake of himself. Nay, more, when he did not speak, but simply stood forth and wrought, so as to be seen and known, even then he most fully disclosed the nature and the character of God. He had only to say, "I and my Father are one," "Whoso hath seen me hath seen the Father," and then to stand still or move along before the eyes of men to be looked upon, in order to make manifest to men all of God that they could comprehend.

This person was known in heaven and from eternity as the Son of God; on earth and in time as Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour of men. The writer first exalts the gospel above the law by setting forth the exaltation of the Son of God, its messenger and its message. He is above Moses, a faithful servant in God's house, because He is a Son in his Father's house. He is above angels, because He hath a more excellent name than they;

because He is set forth to be worshiped by them; because He is Lord in the kingdom in which they are but ministers, even as the winds and flames of fire, to do His bidding; because He is Creator, and they are creatures; because He is Eternal, and they are the offspring of time. But in this chiefly is He above all men and all angels, that He is the brightness of the glory and the express image of the person of God. It is to this view of Him that we now direct our thoughts. The Hebrew word which we translate glory signifies that which is heavy, massive, and grand and sublime. It conveys a conception and feeling of the majesty of God. The Greek word for the same expresses that which one thinks of another, and so his estimate and appreciation of him. It then comes to signify the ground of this estimate, the excellence, honorableness of another. This word, therefore, conveys the notion of God's excellence.

In both the old Scripture and the new, whatever may be the word for the divine glory, its symbol is always light. God is light, He is a sun, He dwelleth in light, He clothes Himself with light as with a garment. The light in the cloud was the token of His presence, the light of the Shekinah was the proof of His indwelling, the light in the temple was the sign of His majestic appearing to the prophet. Then, again, in the New Scripture, God is light, He is the father of lights, a sun without variableness or shadow of turning, the effulgence that causes the night to cease in heaven and the sun to be needless to the eternal day. From this symbol of the divine grandeur and excellence we receive our expressive word glory. It conveys the conception of outshining splendor.

Gathering together all the thought in these associated words, we conceive God as grand in His nature, perfect in His character, and beautiful in every manifestation of Himself to the view of intelligent and sensitive beings. The grandeur of His nature consists in His being an eternal and infinite spirit, limitless in presence, in knowledge, in wisdom, in power. The perfection of His character consists in His righteousness, His goodness, His truth. His beauty is that undefinable yet most real quality of His variously manifested excellence which is discovered by the subtle sense, and felt in the peculiar sensibility with which God has gifted all spirits. It is the cause of profoundest joy to all who know and love and worship Him. Of this glory of God, "Jesus Christ, his Son," is said to be "the brightness."

The original word is formed from a verb which signifies "*to flash out.*" It may be interpreted accordingly as "an out-flashing." The glory of God is as light, and the Son as its flash forth into view. You will get the idea if you conceive an intense light enclosed in a dark lantern, which is suddenly opened so that the rays dart out into the surrounding black-

ness. The flash is not something different from the light, but the light let out of limits and acting on the darkness. The Son of God is not represented as uncovering the glory of the Father. He is not the mere hand which draws the slide of the lantern so that the light breaks through. He is the light. It is not said of Him, "who" disclosing or showing, but "who *being* the brightness of His glory." Expanding the idea, the ancient creed declared Him "light of light," "very God of very God."

But there is yet another expression, the meaning and force of which we need to understand and feel. "The express image of His person." For the phrase "express image" there is a single word in the original, a word transferred and familiar in our own language, viz., character. It is formed from a word signifying to sharpen, then to scratch or furrow with a sharp instrument, to write, to engrave. Our term, therefore, means a writing or engraving, and in this sense we often use it. So also as a form is engraven on a seal and then stamped upon wax, the word indicates a figure enstamped upon wax or soft metal. The figure impressed is precisely like the graving which determines it. The word accordingly signifies likeness. Then, from the notion of likeness, it extends to that of sameness, so that we say of one's combined qualities, they constitute his character, and more emphatically the character is the man. It is the man revealed and known.

The Son of God is, then, the revelation of the person of God. And to this term person, in the language of the New Testament, we do not attach the later metaphysical notion. It is simply equivalent to "self."

We have now the whole thought in this pregnant phrase: Jesus Christ is God's very self revealed and known. He could say of Himself truly, as He said, "He that seeth me seeth Him that sent Me." Paul declared Him to the Corinthians, "the image of God," and to the Colossians, "the image of the invisible God." And all this was but a repetition of the witnessing of the Baptist when he "cried, saying" . . . "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," or, in his own expressive utterance, "led him forth" to view.

The sum of the whole, then, is this: the glorious nature of God is perceived and known in Jesus Christ. He is simply "God manifest in the flesh."

We are by no means to forget that there is a person—God, our Father. We are not to cease to seek, to know, to love, to worship and obey Him. The Son has come to make Him known; to stand as a mediator between Him and us; to reconcile us to Him by His blood, to adopt us into His family, and to inspire in us the spirit of adoption by the Holy Ghost. The manifestation of Christ to us is ineffectual, His work for

us is incomplete, if we fail to come to God by Him, crying, Abba! Father! But this we must remember, that God can only be known in and by the Son. We can behold "the glory of God" alone "in the face of Jesus Christ." "He is the true light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."

Does any man say, God is seen and known in nature? We must respond, something, nay, much of God may be perceived and felt in the earth and the heavens. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." But who "laid the foundations of the earth," who "stretched out the heavens as a curtain, and spread them out as a tent to dwell in?" Who "hath created these things," who hath "brought out their host by numbers?" "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands." So answers the Father, addressing the Son, "by whom He made the worlds," the word made flesh, "by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made."

But some man will say, God is seen and known in His providence. This we must concede. To those who look for Him He will be manifest in the stability of things, the order of the seasons, the life of nature, the course of events, the history of men. But who sustains the fixedness of things, and moves the circles of nature, and guides the current of events, and shapes the destinies of peoples? Let the word of truth answer: "By Him all things consist, who, upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, who hath given Him to be the head over all things to the church."

Yet, however clearly God is manifest in the works and providence of His Son, He is not seen. When men knew God they glorified Him not as God. They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. They "changed the truth of God into a lie; they worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator. And God gave them over to a reprobate mind and to vile affections, until darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people." A revelation was needful, a manifestation of a personal God. A light supernatural must shine into the dismal blackness of the natural. God must come out of His hiding-place. The light of nature covered Him as a garment. The vesture must be rent, and the brightness, the out-flashing of His glory must be seen; the character of His person, Himself, must be manifest.

But more than this we must assert. Even if man had preserved an open eye, an attentive and understanding mind, a sensitive, responsive heart, the whole of God could not have been seen and felt in His works and His providence. His

moral nature could not be set forth in material products, in the developments of the life of men. Nature could not reveal His justice, the whole of His goodness. Providence could not demonstrate them in its progress, and if it might reveal them in its winding up, it would be forever too late for the benefit of man. How do we stand confused, amazed and dumb before God's dealings with the full light of revelation blazing on us—faith our only resource, hope in the final issue our only comfort! There must be more for men than the science that interprets nature, the philosophy of history which unwinds the thread of providence, if they shall ever know the character of God.

And yet more. And here we touch our inmost sensibility and express our profoundest need when we say, there is nothing in nature, there is nothing in common providence to offer hope to man the sinner. Study nature as you will, it returns you nothing but force and law. Obey its law, and its force will serve you. Disobey its law, and its force will smite you. The man who walks obeys the law of gravitation, and gravity sustains him. The innocently mistaken child who steps from the window disobeys the law, and gravity dashes him to pieces on the stones below. There is no appeal from law to favor. There is no mercy to weaken or annul or counteract the force. Transgression is ruin.

So in common providence. There are laws and forces. The keen-witted perceive the laws; the practical connect their projects with the forces, and they are lifted on to success. The ignorant and unwise, the incautious and the reckless, miss the rule and cross the path of the power, and are hurled to the earth and traveled over. There is no elasticity of law, there is no grace in force.

Let a man bring this interpretation of God into the moral sphere. Let him know the law that will not cease to rule in his conscience and in his spiritual nature. Let him learn by experience that obedience is joy and disobedience is suffering. Then let him feel that there is no appeal from law, there is no removal of destructive power from its awful work within his soul, and all his knowledge must conduce to terrible, irremediable despair. There is no revelation of mercy in nature to the sinner. There is but one awful inference from nature for the sinner. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." If God shall be known as a God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin, He must come forth in person, show us His glory, cause all His goodness to pass before, and proclaim His name, "Jehovah! Jehovah! God merciful and gracious!" This God has done, but ever by the person and the word of His only-begotten Son. He alone hath

declared Him. The Jehovah of the olden time was therefore the Son of God. The Jesus of the latter time was proclaimed at Jordan the Son of God. The Lord Jehovah, and the Lord Jesus, one and the same, is the radiance of the glory, the character of the person, of God."

We come, then, to this most practical point. You who will know God seek Him in His Son. Behold Him walking as the angel Jehovah in the ancient church, behold Him walking as the Christ in the midst of His disciples. God is not other than you see Him here; God is just what you see Him here. There is no hidden element of the divine nature slumbering in the Father in heaven while other elements are manifest in Jesus Christ. Mysteriously, yet most really, is the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father.

"Here the whole deity is known." You who will know what God is to the sinner, seek Him in His Son. There is not a hidden mind in the Father and another in the Son. There is not one heart in the Father and another in Jesus. Whatever disposition in look, or word, or act Jesus Christ has ever shown toward sinners is the entire and entirely fixed disposition of the whole nature of God to you.

This is a truth we need constantly to affirm to you. You are wont to think of the wrath of God against sinners as somehow held in reserve in the bosom of the Father, and the love of God as throbbing in the bosom of Jesus. You seem sometimes to feel that Jesus, as mediator dying a sacrifice, as intercessor urging an appeal, is somehow in antagonism with the Father, and the Father hiding His face from the persistent and unrepentant sinner as in opposition to the Son. You think you see all the severity in the one, all the goodness in the other. Make haste to be undeceived. As the God of our faith and the Son of His love are indivisible in being, so are they blended in feeling.

Do you say God has stern regard for His law? So has Jesus. Did He not reaffirm the law? Did He not whet the second blade of it in its interior demands, and make it the two-edged sword piercing even to the joints of our inmost frame, and touching the marrow of our thought and feeling? Did He not declare that until heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle of it should fail till all shall be fulfilled? As for Himself, He was made under the law; He magnified it and made it honorable. Knowing it could not be recalled, rather than it should be violated He invoked justice to transfer its condemnation from His people to Himself, to recall its curse from them and expend it to the full on Him, to lift the shaft of vengeance glittering in wrathful light above their heads and thrust it deep within His heart.

Do you say God is severe to mark iniquity? So is Jesus Christ. Bring before your mind the group of sullen Scribes and

Pharisees, scowling upon Him in the cruel hatred of unveiled hypocrisy and crushed pride and fathomed shallowness, and hear His burning words of conviction, recrimination and doom: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Do you remember that "God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil"? Then remember also that it is the Son of man who is to come in His glory and sit upon His throne, and gather all nations and separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. It is He who shall say, Depart, ye cursed. Do you feel that God will pour out His wrath upon the ungodly on the great day? You may read in the gospel of Jesus Christ of the wrath of the Lamb and of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

In a word, there is no manifestation of the nature of God in opposition to sin and in retribution against the incorrigibly ungodly so calm, determined, decided, severe and awful as that which is made in the words and yet will be made in the person of that Man by whom He will judge the world.

And in like manner, on the other hand, the Father is in fullest sympathy with the Son in every expression of His divine-human mercy, compassion, tenderness and grace to repenting, returning and pleading souls. If the Son of God from the beginning longed for the salvation of men, God the Father from eternity loved the world. If the Son of God so loved the world that He gave His life a ransom for the many, God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but might have everlasting life. If Jesus suffered unutterable agonies on the cross for us and our salvation, God the Father witnessed and felt the sacrifice. If Jesus Christ spoke words of ineffable kindness and gentleness, how often and how emphatically did He declare, "The words that I speak I speak not of myself," but "as my Father has taught me, I speak these things"? If Jesus Christ wrought innumerable works of mercy and grace, how constantly and decidedly did He affirm, "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works," "I do always those things that please Him"? If His life of teaching and example and suffering was one continuous surrender and employment of Himself for our eternal salvation and blessedness, did He not close it to ascend to His Father, crying, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do"?

Yes, in the person and mission of Jesus Christ, whatever in God is arrayed against the sinner, and whatever is patient, and long-suffering, and merciful, and gracious, and helpful, and saving for the sinner, is manifest equally and as fully in Jesus Christ.

“Here the whole deity is known,
Nor dares a creature guess
Which of the glories brighter shone,
The Justice or the Grace.”

But we are not yet exposed to the severity of justice ; we are invited to the leniency of grace. Let us behold, then, the grace of God in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can you even doubt the willingness of God to save you when you behold the Son, in human flesh, humbled by the fellowship of our nature in its narrowness and feebleness, exposed to the penalty of our sin in its guilt and shamefulness, agonizing in the garden of Golgotha, mantled with shame in Pilate's hall and dying on the cross? Can you doubt the willingness of God to receive you when you hear his Son inviting, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”; telling with divinely human pathos the story of the prodigal son; when you see Him looking with sad reproof on the erring Peter, and behold the smile of pardoning love illuminate the face shadowed with sorrow as it turns to the penitent thief? Can you doubt the gentleness of God when you behold His Son sitting at Bethany with Mary at His feet, and at supper with John on His bosom; when you gaze with wonder on the submissive surrender of His feet to the tears and kiss of the woman which was a sinner, and hear His benediction on that other woman who touched the hem of His garment, and His eulogy ever memorial of that other one still who would not ask the children's bread, but the waste and fallen crumbs of blessing? Can you doubt God's readiness most freely to forgive when you hear echoing forever through the gospel those eager words of Jesus, “Son, daughter, go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee”? Can you doubt God's willingness to forget the past guilt and shame of your sinful life when you see the Son of man appearing to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and hear his call to the chiefest dignity of the apostleship, and see him thenceforth the most cherished and blessed among His servants, and regard him now as the immortal teacher of the truth, the equal of the beloved evangelist, and second only to the Lord in the memory and reverence of all spiritual souls?

If you have ever risen from the perusal of the gospel, saying to yourself, I could go to Him, if He were only here I would dare to confess to Him all my sin and shame, and hope in His mercy and grace, expect His sympathy and support; then know, that as you would come to Him were He on the earth, so may you come to Him now, and when you come to Him, you come to God by Him. There is nothing concealed, there is nothing partially revealed in Him. He is the brightness of the glory, the character of the person, of God.

Who, then, conscious of his sin, judging his ill-desert, ashamed

of his defilement, will yet be afraid of God? Who need be afraid of Emmanuel, God with us? Who need reluctantly approach the Lord of Mary and the Syrophenician woman, of Saul and the penitent thief?

Is there one trembling soul in this place to-day thirsting after God and yet striving to hide from His face for fear of Him? Is there one orphaned spirit here longing for the Father's love and the Father's house, and in sad misgiving still wandering in a far country? Oh! look into the face of Jesus Christ and be reassured, and make haste to rise up and go to your Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned! I have sinned!

And with the glowing picture which our Lord has lined upon the imagination of man forever, radiant with promise and welcome in your view, believe that, while yet a great way off, the Father will have compassion on you, and be swift to meet you and ready to cover you with the new robe of the Saviour's righteousness, and put upon your feet the sandals of prompt obedience, and set upon your uplifted hand the signet ring of heirship, and spread before you the festal board of welcome and of joy!

I seem to hear the voice of Jesus saying, Come! As an ambassador for God I stand, beseeching you in Christ's stead, and echo, Come! The Spirit in your heart is whispering, Come! The bride, the Church, is crying, with myriad tongues, Come. Hark! there are voices in the air, as of the multitude of the redeemed, shouting, Come! Floating on outspread wings around this hallowed place, ten thousand thousand angels are singing, Come! We pause, we wait, we listen! From the stillness of your yet reluctant soul shall we not hear the plaintive but confident response, I come, I come?

The Crowning of the Year.

A SERMON

By J. H. Rylance, D.D., NEW YORK, ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOV. 29, 1877.

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.—Psalms lxxv : 11.

WE have been called once more by the joint authority of the State and National Governments to acknowledge through the public offices of religion "the good hand of God" which is still over us for good. With many, perhaps, the occasion will be observed merely as an hereditary custom, while by others the day will be spent, probably, in merely pleasurable indulgence or in riotous dissipation. Yet, in its ultimate moral effect, Thanksgiving Day never fails, I believe, to exercise a salutary influence upon the public temper and conscience, regarding it simply as a national proclamation of our faith in God and of our dependence upon His goodness and power; while its influence as a witness to our common Brotherhood as a people, is every year more widely felt, there is good ground to hope.

The recurrence of the festival carries our thoughts back to a period of Christian faith and simplicity with which our own age compares unfavorably, I fear. God was very near to men, and their sense of dependence upon His power and goodness was deep and real, when they instituted thanksgiving days and observed them in the spirit they did. I question if the political and philosophical faith of our own day would ever give birth to such an institution. Professing to believe in God in a polite and conventional way, we have come practically to deny Him by placing between Himself and us so many second causes, which we endow with an independent efficiency, and in which we place our trust rather than in God. Of course, no one can deny the presence of such second causes, for the Divine Being does not work visibly and directly in the government of the universe. There is a mysterious chain of dependence running up through every department of creation, the course and subtle connections of which it is the office of science to discover. All that the Theist or the Christian believer holds more than this, is the faith that the first link of that chain is anchored in the throne of God. To fix our gaze upon what are mere instrumentalities, and to revere and worship them as God, is a blunder we should pity in the savage, who, on beholding the busy whirl of a vast and complicated machine, ignorant of the skill that planned, constructed, and still controls it, should take the shafts and levers and pulleys to be so many automatic powers. But

all who substitute the *laws* of nature for the *God* of nature are guilty of such a folly. They are atheists in *word*, at least, if not in faith and conviction.

"The philosophy of the Holy Scriptures is of another character. Does the rain fall? It is 'our Father in heaven' who sends it 'upon the just and upon the unjust'! Is the earth robed in the garments of a varied beauty? It is God 'who so' clothes the grass of the field! Do day and night succeed each other? It is 'He that turneth the shadow of death into morning, and maketh the day dark with night'! Do the elements rage? 'Flames of fire are his messengers, and stormy winds fulfil His word'! Am I sick? His 'rod is upon me.' Am I in health? 'He healeth all my diseases.' All things serve Him, run on His messages, fulfil His commands, execute His counsels."—*Watson*.

The text recognizes this immanent presence and power of God in all the economy of nature. "In Him we live and move and have our being." "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights." We cannot pause to vindicate such an assumption now, nor need we attempt it. Our presence here this morning, in the attitude of worship, declares our faith in the fatherhood and providence of God, who "crowneth the year with His goodness."

And since Thanksgiving Day was instituted first and chiefly as a sort of national "harvest-home" celebration, and considering the importance of our varied agricultural produce to our well-being as a people, we may fittingly mention, as the *first* occasion or ground of gratitude this morning, the abundant rewards with which Providence has again blessed the labors of the husbandman. We may fail to be moved by such benedictions, dwelling as we do amid the whirl of mechanical industries and the activities of commerce; yet *these* are very intimately and vitally dependent, as we know, upon what, after all, is the deepest fountain of our wealth and welfare—namely, the culture of the soil. For wheat, or bread, is emphatically "the staff of life," as we call it in familiar speech; insomuch that if famine, only in this one item of public sustenance, should ever visit us, wailing would go up from every cottage and mansion in the land at the overwhelming calamity. If we had ever beheld maddened crowds of men and women and children clamoring for bread when the supply had failed or been cut off; could we have seen, for example, the misery and the desolation which famine wrought of late in certain sections of India, where the soil was almost literally covered with the emaciated forms of those who had perished through want, we should have learned that *bread* is that one simple, permanent, universal necessity without which all our wealth were but rubbish; while in its social relations, this question of bread underlies every other. You cannot proceed to consider a second till this is provided for. All other material comforts and necessities even wait upon this; for you must *feed* the body

before you can lay plans for clothing it, for the gaudiest attire sits uneasily on an empty stomach, while all the higher questions of education and the finer virtues are out of sight till this stubborn and insatiate appetite for food is still. It wakes into life with the newly-born infant, and death is near our doors when its cravings are no longer felt. It is the root of animal strength, which does all our rough, heavy work, without which the world of fine sentiment and taste would starve. You have the first condition of manipulating and educating a people into something better than brutes when you have plenty of cheap, wholesome bread within reach. "Man does not live by bread only," I know; nor will bread, with all the material accessories you can supply, lift him very high in the scale of civilization. But as long as the spirit is embodied in flesh, bread is a condition precedent, which, when fairly met, you can proceed to work of a higher order. As a rule, all the finer senses are shut till this low, rude, restless sense is appeased.

Before I leave this topic let me ask you to observe and to reflect upon the fact how that our whole service for Thanksgiving, as it stands in the Prayer-book, is shaped and toned from beginning to end by this one idea of plenty in "the fruits of the earth" and the increase of the soil; there is a sweet, tranquil, pastoral simplicity pervading every part. The very first sentence opens with a reference to the "first fruits of increase," and "barns filled with plenty," and "presses bursting with wine;" while the invocation to praise calls us to consider the heavens "covered with clouds" and the "rain prepared for the earth," and the grass growing on the mountains, and the beasts and the ravens that are fed by God's hand. Then follows the first lesson, with its glowing praise of the land which the Hebrew held to be the glory of all lands, with its "brooks of water, of fountains and depths which spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive and honey; a land wherein one might eat bread without scarceness; whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills men might dig brass." And then we have the special thanksgiving for "the clouds which drop down the dew," and for "the return of seed-time and harvest; for the increase of the ground and the gathering in of the fruits thereof;" and so on throughout. There is the imagery, and the rural simplicity, and the almost jocund spirit of a service for "harvest home," as it was kept in the olden time. Now, much or all of this seems strange and foreign to us because of the little practical contact we have with such things. But the most affluent springs of our wealth, as I just remarked, are not here in New York, nor in all of our great cities together, but in our oil springs and in our mines, and,

above all, in the vast, far-reaching valleys and plains, where the cattle are grazing or the plowman is driving his plow. Cut off those supplies, and the red man may come back to his haunts on these shores. It is the wealth which comes out of "mother earth" which is at the foundation of all our gain and material contentment; and it is well, therefore, to make grateful mention of these benefits on a day such as this. It is the perennial supply of such natural wealth which has stood us in such good stead in bearing the burdens imposed by our fearful civil war, which has maintained our credit abroad, and which is slowly restoring confidence and prosperity at home. God has indeed crowned the year with His goodness in abundant harvests, out of which not only have our own wants been supplied, but commerce has been busy in transporting the surplus to the remoter markets of the world; in exchange for which we have received the gold we so much need, or commodities which we must otherwise have paid for in gold.

And this fact furnishes a good ground of confidence for the future; for this continent will be for long, in all probability, the Egypt of the world to which men will come "to buy corn." Not only so, but this country is fast taking first-class rank among the *manufacturing* powers of the world. Our late Exhibition elicited a very general acknowledgment of the fact, which is rapidly bearing fruit in the revival of our domestic industries. Converging lines of evidence, coming from all parts of the globe, tell us very plainly that the mechanical skill of this country, will soon be able to bear the severest competition with the best productions of other lands. For good wages have tempted the best craftsmen to come hither from abroad, while native ingenuity has enriched the world in a multitude of useful and beneficent inventions. It may require a readjustment of some of the laws which hamper or facilitate international commerce to give us the full benefit of our natural and acquired advantages; but that will not be denied very long under the growing demand for American productions. Our constantly improving financial condition will soon allow of a freer intercourse in commerce between this and other lands, to which we may hope our statesmen will turn their attention as soon as they can spare time from sectional and party wrangling. With only fair opportunities afforded, this country is destined to be one of the great workshops of the world, and that is saying, in effect, that it has a great future before it. And from this assurance we may well take hope. Let none of us indulge the suspicion that the depression and stagnation of the last few years is the normal condition of our country for the future. The tribulation has been much longer than that which has attended other panics or periods of depression in our history; but the causes which produced this last were much deeper and

more difficult to eradicate than any we had ever known before. It was not speculation simply, or an imprudent resort to the credit system in business, or a wanton extravagance on the part of many who had not the means honestly to indulge such appetites or tastes. All these have contributed to our present depressed and demoralized condition, no doubt; but these were not the primary causes. The land was flooded with fictitious money, which the struggle for national existence had required, while much of the money disbursed by the Government was not paid for services which produced an increase of the nation's wealth, but for services which destroyed wealth on a vast and an appalling scale; so that, while everybody for the time seemed richer, in reality we were every day and every hour poorer, which fact was sure to make itself felt one day to the dismay and ruin of many. Now, from that hollow, dissipated life and the consequent diseases we are slowly recovering. Prostration was sure to come. Never nation yet passed through such an experience without reaction. Look at England at the close of the great anti-Napoleon struggle in 1815. The condition of Great Britain at that epoch was far more desperate than we have ever known; but she had a basis for recuperation in her, and she rallied. And let no one doubt of our own recovery. We have been desperately sick; some may have deemed us at the point of death; but to-day we are manifestly convalescent, and ere long we shall feel the pulsations of a lusty health through all the veins of the national life. Meanwhile, let us remember what a wise physician often says to a patient: "Keep up your spirits—do not yield to despondency; for that hinders recovery, while it sometimes produces relapse." Yes, hopefulness is the feeling to be encouraged just now, I believe, especially among Christian people. For God Almighty has greater things in store for this New World, surely, than the infantile results of our first hundred years. "A land of wheat and barley," and vineyards; "whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass;" nay, not brass only, but *gold*; with a cosmopolitan population having qualities in it for the grandest material and moral achievements; with a pure and vigorous Christianity penetrating its domestic and social life; none but a morbidly distempered soul will say, surely, that all this is to end speedily in miserable failure. There is a good deal to favor and to foster such despairing views, I know, in the life which is reflected in our newspapers. But evil is like scum—it floats on the surface; and so you see it, or hear of it through the public prints. But the newspaper tells you very little of the deep, quiet, solid life of truth and love which men and women are living all around you, but which creates no sensation, simply because it is not a disturbing force in public affairs. Make allowance, moreover, for the fierce

temptations which have sprung out of the abnormal conditions of recent years, but which have now well-nigh spent their force, we may hope, and the most despondent among you may take heart again at the brightening prospect of our national life. One thing is clear, at all events: that our adversities have been due to our own sins, while the goodness of God has never failed us, but has crowned every year with richer and more abundant benedictions.

But graver grounds of disquietude are discovered by some men among us as existing in the structure of our political polity. And by such men it is more than doubted whether our institutions can very much longer bear the stress put upon them by a partisan selfishness, and by the blind and vicious use of the citizen suffrage. Whatever we may think of these things in the abstract, however, it is too late to reorganize our system of government upon a more intelligent basis. The evils resulting from investing the ignorant and reckless among us with political power are glaring and deplorable, especially as seen in our large cities, degrading and contaminating the whole administration of public affairs, tempting good men to stand aloof from all association with the base and the bad, who push their way into places of power. Yet, in the community as a whole, we have hitherto found that there is a vast amount of sober and conservative good sense; and we have seen our worst days, I believe, in grappling with the evils incident to popular government. If only education and Christian culture can maintain and extend their dominion among us, the perils which surround us will prove comparatively harmless, I am fain to hope. Compared with past periods in our history, the present is hopeful and the future bright with promise. Spite of the animosities and bitter contentions which mark the hour in the political arena, the nation responds in its heart, I believe, to the resolve of its Chief Magistrate to purge out the old leaven which has so long corrupted the administration of affairs. I say not this from any sympathy I may cherish for this party or for that; but the conscience of the country will demand, I trust, that it shall be done, or that a stern condemnation shall rest upon those who hinder it. Whatever may be our preferences in what we call "party politics," moreover, I doubt not but that we all sympathize with the yearning that is in the air, so to speak, for the reunion of the long-divided and sometimes embittered hearts of two great sections of our country. The task has been heavy and difficult to readjust the columns of the national temple, which were but lately so rudely cast down; but the promise of success is daily and hourly brighter. Time has done much to heal the wounds inflicted by civil war. Upon many a battle plain, where the iron hail plowed deep furrows in the soil, and all the fair face of nature was gashed and scarred by war-

rior hosts; where the land for miles around, when the tide of battle had rolled past, was lifted into rude heaps where lay the shattered remains of the noble dead; even there nature has spread a mantle o'er the ghastly scene, and the husbandman pursues his peaceful industry, and the quiet, patient herds wind along the slopes of hills or browse in pleasant pastures where then the air was thick with a "confused noise" and the earth was "rolled in blood"! Even so has time laid her soothing hand on bruised and broken hearts, and hid, to some extent, in a merciful oblivion the memories of the bitter past. May the reconciliation of the too long alienated affections and interests of the land be perfected. There is every providential occasion to favor such a consummation. No longer is there any organic element in the national compact to be made the cause of sectional hostility or of hate. It only needs that those who shape public sentiment shall be honest and discerning and just; and that those who are set to rule shall be faithful to their delegated duties, impartial to all sections and interests, having grace "to execute justice and to maintain truth," that this great national household of ours may long "dwell together in unity." We need no imperial gifts; neither vast attainments of learning, in those who guide affairs. We need no more than good common sense, inspired and controlled by purity of purpose. May, then, the mutual confidence and co-operation, the inception of which we have seen, grow purer and deeper and broader between all the members of our political fellowship, till every scar of the old conflicts shall disappear, and the cluster of States composing this great commonwealth shall henceforth provoke one another "only to love and good works." Almighty God has been manifestly disposing many minds to this end of late. And for every honest endeavor to attain it, by any man or by any party, we are ready, I am sure, to give God thanks this morning, who alone "maketh men to be of one mind in a house."

In view, then, of all the blessings with which the heavenly Father has crowned another year of our national life, let our song this morning be "of the loving-kindness of the Lord." "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion: for He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates, He hath blessed thy children within thee; He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat." Amen.

A Sabbath-School Sermon.**A SERMON**

By **C. H. Spurgeon**, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, LONDON, ENGLAND,
OCTOBER 28, 1877.

"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom."—
Isaiah xl: 11.

MINISTERS all over England have been specially requested to assist in exciting a spirit of prayer in connection with Sabbath-schools to-day, and I feel that the training of the young is so important a part of church work that it would be almost sinful to decline the seasonable request of the Sunday-School Union. Therefore have I selected this subject this morning in the hope that God the Holy Spirit may bless it, not only to those who are teachers, but to those who ought to be, and afterward to those of us who may be otherwise occupied in the Master's vineyard, that we also may be led more earnestly to pray for our brothers and sisters who are watching over the lambs of the flock.

The words of our text are spoken of One who is in the tenth verse called "The Lord God with strong hand," and of whom we are asked in verse 12, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" It is a wonderful proof of the tenderness of God that very generally when He is spoken of by His glorious titles, and is described in the infinity of His power, we are before long assured of His great gentleness by having some special deed of kindness ascribed to Him. He is the Lord God with strong hand and ruling arm, but He carrieth the lambs in His bosom; He bringeth out the starry host by number, He calleth them all by names in the greatness of His might, and yet He "doth gently lead those that are with young." How condescending it is on the part of the great Lord that He should come to shepherdize men! How marvelous that it should be said of the Almighty God, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd"—shall act the shepherd toward His chosen among the sons of men: guiding, feeding, protecting, nourishing and healing them! It is Jehovah Jesus, who, though He accounted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet came down to earth that He might be the shepherd of men. A shepherd bears among his flock in wonderful conjunction the offices of ruler and of servant. He rules and guides and controls his flock, but at the same time he waits upon them as the servant of all. Be-

hold, in the Lord Jesus you see one who was justly recognized by His disciples as their Master and Lord, and yet, as the servant of servants, He washed the feet of His disciples. He came as God to be a Prince and a Saviour, but He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant. He bowed Himself to save His people, to help their infirmities, to sympathize with their sorrows, and even to suffer for their sins. Behold what manner of love the great Shepherd of the sheep has manifested toward us.

It is notable that to accomplish this work the Lord is represented as coming with strength: "Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him." From which I gather that the work of saving men is one which requires the putting forth of strength, even when he who undertakes it is divine. He is mighty to save, for it requires might to save a soul. If you and I, under God, are called to attempt the work of soul-saving, we must certainly borrow divine strength if we are to succeed, for what power to save can dwell in an arm of flesh? Nor must we ever treat the work of caring for the souls of men with indifference, nor go about it with carelessness. It is not a secondary work, to be pursued at leisure as a species of amusement; it filled the Saviour's heart and hands so that the zeal of it ate Him up; and unless you have the same power resting upon you which also dwelt in Him, and something of the same fervor, you will never be able to perform it aright. O servant of the living God, see that your loins be girt with omnipotence for such a task as this, for to save the soul of the smallest child in the Sabbath-school will need the same power that raised Christ from the dead.

The Lord would also have you feel that soul-winning can only be done in earnest: it requires energy and fervency. We must exercise every faculty, use all our intellect, arouse all our affection, and continue laboring with unbounded perseverance if by any means we may save some. When I behold the Lord coming forth to save, even the Lord who made the heavens and the earth, I know what a work it must be; and when I see even Him coming with a strong hand making His arm to rule for Him, I comprehend that it is no child's-play to be a soul-winner. If God Himself putteth on strength, then you and I must ask for power beyond our own that we may be useful in this heavenly service.

Beautifully does our text set forth not only the great power exerted by our Lord Jesus, but also His tender love, for not only does He come forth to care for men as His sheep, but He undertakes work among the lambs, among the feeblest, the smallest, the youngest. No part of this work is beneath Him: He does all the work of a good shepherd. It is supposed by some that it needs greater genius and ability to care for the

sheep than for the lambs: I have even known preachers speak of bringing their minds down to the comprehension of children. They know little of the matter, for to preach a child's sermon or write a really good child's book is a very difficult task and requires the highest ability. Jesus evidently thinks not lightly of the little ones nor of the service which they require. His shoulders may suffice for lost sheep, but His bosom is reserved for the lambs; they need and shall have our Lord's best. With divine sweetness and tenderness the Redeemer carries the lambs in His fond embrace, and lends both His heart and His arm to cherish and protect them.

We have before us in the text a *lovely outline portrait of the Good Shepherd*. Let us look at the picture and notice its main beauties, and when we have done so sufficiently let us see therein *an example for the church, and a model for the teacher of the young*.

I. We have to examine A PORTRAIT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD. Let us study it with care. "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in His bosom." What see I in this picture? First, I see the Lord of angels *condescending to personal labor*. Jesus Christ Himself gathers with His own arm and carries in His own bosom the lambs of His flock. He doth not commit this work to an angel, nor does He even leave it to His ministers; but He Himself, by His Spirit, still undertakes it. He cared for the lambs while He was here below. He suffered the little children to come unto Him, and He took them in His arms and blessed them. He spoke very plainly, so that the young could understand His words, for He cared for their souls. We have frequent indications that He was often followed by a great company of young people; and we know that they were ready to give Him their hosannas with eager enthusiasm. After He had risen from the dead He did not forget the young of the flock, for He said to Peter, "Feed my lambs." He was the holy child Jesus Himself all His days, and He was a dear lover of the little ones, the true "children's friend." The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, for the Lord had anointed Him to preach glad tidings to the meek and the poor who are as lambs in the flock. He condescended to look after the feeble and weak of the flock Himself, toiling many a weary mile and pleading through many a chilly night on their behalf. Now, though He reigns in heaven, His divine Spirit looks after the young converts, and causes them to grow up in His fear. Many are the Timothies taught from their youth to know the Scriptures whom His grace meets with and saves, and when they are saved, being still His lambs, He watches over them, trains them, instructs them, confirms their faith, guides them in His way, and preserves them to the end. All our mercies, as believers, we owe to our Lord's personal ser-

vice, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on a tree." Not by proxy did He save either His sheep or His lambs; He did not stand and bid others do it and Himself merely give the command, but He Himself here below spent thirty years of personal service among the sons of men. At this moment He is personally pleading for His own, and personally ruling providence on behalf of His little ones. He gathers and He carries still. And if, dear brothers and sisters, we are to be at all like Jesus, we must not merely write tracts about how Sunday-school work is to be done, nor stand on an eminence like a commander-in-chief and give orders, but we must each one personally bend our back and stoop to the lambs; we must put out the strength of our own arm to gather them, and then carry the blessed load of infirmity in our own bosom. We must render personal service if we are to be like our Lord, who gave Himself for us. The first line in the portrait is well drawn, and adds much to its manly beauty: He condescended to personal labor.

The second noteworthy line in the portrait seems to me to be that Jesus was *earnest to save*, and earnest to save little ones. The text doth not merely say that He carries the lambs in His bosom, but that He gathers them. It were great love that He should carry those who come; it is greater love that He gathers those who do not come. Constraining grace goeth out into the midst of the world to fetch in the wandering sheep and lambs, and therein the greatest love is revealed, even the love which puts forth its strength while yet we go astray. The Good Shepherd sees that even children's hearts are far off from Him, and will remain so unless His effectual grace shall go forth to reclaim them from the error of their natural estate; and, glory be to His love, He still doth fetch this one and that one in early days to Himself; not waiting till they come, but going after them, even as the parable of the good Shepherd sets forth, for there the shepherd leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness and goes after that which is gone astray until he finds it. Brothers and sisters, if we are to be like Christ—and I hold the picture up that we may endeavor to copy it—we must not only rejoice when children are saved, and encourage them when we see signs of grace, but we must go after the little tenants of the street, the little disorderly members of our class, the young rebels of our family, and "compel them to come in." It must be the aim of our teaching that children, as children, should become children of the living God. For this we should pray, for this we should seek to be anointed of the Holy Ghost, that we may bring in these lambs from the dark mountains to the green pastures. Whereas they are wayward, inattentive, difficult to rule, forgetful and inapt in spiritual things, we must with great patience gather them, win their hearts, im-

press their minds, and introduce them by divine grace into the fold of love. Look at the picture before you, and you see that your Lord is earnest to save. His face, His hands, His feet, His side, all prove what an eager Saviour He is. He does not tarry at home till wanderers of their own free will seek His face, but He goeth forth to seek the lambs which lie about neglected in these great wilderness cities; He finds them in the fields of ignorance and under the hedges of vice, pining and perishing for lack of knowledge, and He gathers them with His arm.

Thirdly, a very superficial glance will show us that our Lord is *willing to receive*. If He be so eager to gather those who do not come, depend upon it He is willing to receive all who do seek Him. There is never a heart that yearns after Christ, though it be the heart of a little child, but Jesus Christ delights to note those early desires. There is little knowledge as yet in the child's heart about the Lord, and little knowledge as yet of the evil of sin, but Jesus does not expect much from tender youth. Only a feeble ray of light has gleamed into the soul, only a gentle breath of the divine wind has turned the little soul towards Christ, but our Lord perceives it and delights therein. It were well if we could copy this trait in our Lord's character. I am afraid we are not very quick to notice the first impressions of boys and girls, or else we harshly judge that such impressions are writ in water, and having been frequently disappointed we have grown incredulous of children's convictions and children's faith. But it should not be so, for if our Lord gathers the lambs, it is clear that He is willing enough to receive those lambs when they come; and if you are to be like your Master I would exhort each of you to receive with gladness even the least among your scholars when they come to tell you of their new-born faith in Christ. Do not quench the sparks, but fan them to a flame; never crush the bruised reeds, nor throw them away as useless, for with a little care they may be so bound up that your Lord may get music out of them to His eternal praise. Despise not the day of small things. Look not for ripe graces and mature judgment in the early spring of youth, but rejoice in the buds and blossoms. Receive the lambs as lambs, though they are the weakest and most troublesome of the flock. See what your Lord does. The loving tenderness of Christ, and His willingness to receive those who seek Him early, should make our hearts willing to believe in childish piety, quick to perceive it, and ready to rejoice in it. Wisely may we receive those whom Jesus receives; if they are capable of coming to Him and lying in His bosom, they will do no dishonor to the bosom of the Church.

In this portrait I see a fourth beautiful feature, namely, that He is *careful to protect* the feeble lambs. Gathering graciously and receiving kindly, He next guards securely. To this end the

Shepherd places the sickly lamb in His flowing garment, close to His bosom, and carries it there. He will not let it try to walk, for it is as yet too weak; He will not even put it in the fold and leave it with the old sheep, but He must Himself, while it is in a critical state, carry it where it shall be at its ease, and secure from trial or toil. Here in His bosom it will not be pinched by the frost, His heart will keep it warm; here it will not die of weakness, His own life will flow into it and fill its little struggling heart with vitality; here the wolf **cannot** touch it, for unless the wolf could rend the Shepherd, it certainly could not destroy the beloved burden which He carried on His heart. How carefully doth Christ watch over the lambs! He is lovingly watchful over the entire flock, for not one under His care shall perish; but towards these His tenderness is more manifest, for they need it more. It is with Him even as with a mother who is more anxious concerning her little babe or her sick child than concerning the strong of the family. Where the need is greatest the love is most fervent. Christ carrieth the lambs in His bosom because the greatest need requires the most luxurious resting-place and the most calm repose. Beloved friends, we must be very careful to protect young Christians if we would see them become strong in Christ. We should anxiously endeavor to keep them out of temptation, and since they must be tempted more or less, we should endeavor to strengthen them to endure the various forms in which it assails the young. Let us lead them away from habits which debase and amusements which degrade. Let us try to keep from them many of those sinful doubts which have perplexed ourselves, and those heresies which have been a snare to others; above all, let us, by a pious example, endeavor to preserve them from the corruption that is in the world through lust, carrying them in our bosoms to the throne of grace, to the house of God, and to everything which is pure and holy and acceptable to God. As Mr. Greatheart is described by Bunyan as conveying the women and children to the celestial city and fighting the giants for them, even so should we. We must, in the name of the Lord, watch for their souls as those that must give account, keeping guard from week to week lest our hope should be disappointed. Thus shall we be like the Good Shepherd, who is ever careful to protect His own.

“Shepherd of the chosen number,
 They are safe whom thou dost keep;
 Other shepherds faint and slumber,
 And forget to watch the sheep:
 Watchful Shepherd!
 Thou dost wake while others sleep.”

But our Lord's act means more than that, for He might have put the lambs on His shoulders if mere safety were all that He designed. We see by the picture before us that He is *tender*

to cherish the little ones. It is said that He carries them: this is mercy; but this is not all, for He carries them in His bosom: this is tender mercy. To carry is kindness, but to carry in the bosom is loving-kindness. The shoulders are for power and the back for force, but the bosom is the seat of love. Jesus would warm, cheer, comfort and make them happy. The Lord wishes all His people to be happy: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." It is a worthy object to try and make any Christian happy, but especially a young believer, whose weakness needs great gentleness. To clothe religion with gloom is to slander the name of Christ. We should always be most eager to prevent young believers from imagining that to follow Christ is to walk in darkness, for, indeed, it is not so. Hath He not Himself said, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness"? Did not the wise man say concerning wisdom, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace"? The good Shepherd looks to the comfort, peace and enjoyment of His lambs, and He carries them where they will be most happy. If you are to be like your Master, you will try to take away from young believers' hearts all temptation to despondency; you will set before them the richness and freeness of the gospel, the "exceeding great and precious promises," the oath and covenant, and stability of the engagements of God; yea, you will try to let them see the preciousness of Christ, and tell them how exceeding faithful and true you have found Him to be in your own experience. All this will help them to ride at ease on the breast of Jesus' love, if the Holy Ghost graciously assists your endeavors. Do not sow mistrust in their hopeful nature, nor instruct them to be as unbelieving as their fathers. Do not sternly judge and condemn them. Cruelty to children is the worst of cruelty, and unkind and harsh judgments upon inexperienced believers are barbarous and unworthy of the Christian name. Endeavor to comfort and not to distress, to cheer and not to censure, to gladden and not to discourage the babes in grace, for they are dear to the heart of Christ.

Once more, dear friends, you see in the text that Christ the good Shepherd is *loving in His estimate* of the lambs. Men carry in their bosoms their gems, their jewels, and so doth Christ carry the lambs of the flock, regarding them as His peculiar treasure. He knows that in themselves they are nothing worth, but then He puts an estimate upon them according to His own relationship to them. He prizes them because His Father gave them to Him of old to be His portion. The little child that believeth in Christ was given to Christ before the foundations of the world; therefore doth He look upon it as a choice treasure, and it is exceeding dear in His eyes. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," saith He. He knows, too, what the child cost Him, for to redeem a little child from

going down into the pit he must needs bear the penalty due to justice, and suffer even unto death. He sees the purchase of His agonies in every youthful believer. For Him the precious blood flowed from the Redeemer's own heart and bought the child to be His own redeemed forever. He recollects, moreover, what that child will come to if He does not save it by carrying it in His bosom. It has sinned, it has knowingly and willfully sinned, and therefore it lies under the curse of the law, and Jesus mourns to see a soul in that condition, obnoxious to the wrath of God. A soul is a precious thing to Christ, for He believes in its immortality. We know He does, for He speaks of a place "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched," and He it was that told us that the wicked will be driven away into "everlasting punishment." Hence He values souls at a rate unknown to those who dream that men are mere animals, and will one day cease to exist. If they are to pass away and be no more, like things of the dust and of the mist, why should He die for them at all? Why should He care to gather them? But because no diamond can ever equal in value the soul even of a beggar's child, therefore does Christ carry His little ones in His bosom as exceeding precious to Him.

And He knows, too, what may come of that child if He saveth it, for the possibilities of blessing within one little saved child who shall estimate but the Lord who knoweth all things? I read the other day a pleasing anecdote of what one lamb may come to. A ewe brought forth three lambs, and the brutal shepherd threw the third into the hedge that there might be the more milk for the other two. A poor woman passing by begged for the thrown away lamb, employed her utmost care in nursing it by means of a sucking bottle, and reared it till it could eat grass for itself. She turned it upon the common, and in due course it produced her twins; by care she at length raised a whole flock of sheep from the single ewe, and in process of time she became a woman of considerable estate. See what one poor half-dead lamb may yet produce. Who knows what one poor trembling soul may yet bring forth? Jesus knows that perhaps a boy may be here who will be the spiritual father of scores and hundreds of thousands ere he dies. There may be in the congregation of to-day a Chrysostom or an Augustine. Right among us may sit a little Whitefield or a young Luther, or some other of honorable character who shall lead many to Christ. There was a dreadful snow-storm one Sabbath morning when Dr. Tyng of New York set out to preach, and when he reached the church there was only one poor little girl there. Most preachers would have gone home when one child made up the whole of the congregation; but Dr. Tyng went through the service as earnestly as if the pews had been crowded. He preached to the little girl, and God gave him that girl's soul,

and never was he better repaid. To his knowledge she had been the means of bringing some twenty-five to the Lord Jesus, and among them was one of his own sons. The greatest orator, the most spiritual teacher, the most useful evangelist may not dare to depise one of Christ's little ones. It were worth while for all the ministers in England to journey round the world to save the soul of a single shoeblack or of one girl in the workhouse. Value the little ones by their possibilities, and you will reckon one lamb to be an untold treasure, worthy to be preserved in the casket of your loving care. Luther's schoolmaster always used to take off his hat to his boys when he entered the schoolroom, because he said he did not know what they might become, and had he known that Martin Luther had been there he could not have done better than he did. Jesus Christ knows what He can make of little children in heaven, and so He carries them in His bosom because they shall be forever near the Father's throne to behold His face. He has learned to estimate them at their eternal value; a value which His grace has put upon them and which He never forgets.

Now, if there were time to take my text and handle it in another shape I should divide my subject thus: first, here are *two evils* about young believers and young children, and these are—wandering and weakness. They are far away from God by nature, and when they are brought nigh they are very weak as to divine things. Secondly, there are *two attributes* in the Lord Jesus to meet with and overcome the two evils: here is strength to gather the wandering with His arm, and here is love to cherish weakness till it forgets itself and becometh strong. Thirdly, here are *two operations* performed by the two attributes to meet the two infirmities—here is gathering and here is carrying. It is very delightful to note how our blessed Lord, whose marred face I seem to see at this very moment, does the gathering and the carrying with equal ease. Even now by faith I see His pierced feet pursuing the truant lambs, His wounded hands laying hold upon them, and His bosom, so full of the divinest love, receiving and bearing them. Do you not hear the sweet accents of His voice saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven"? He is still gathering and still carrying by His word and Spirit, and so will He do until He shall come. God help us in this to imitate Him to the end.

II. Let us now remember in our text we have AN EXAMPLE FOR THE CHURCH. There are two great things which a church ought always to have, namely, an arm to gather with and a bosom to carry in. I want to speak to you members of the church now not merely about the Sunday-school, but concerning every other part of our soul-seeking and soul-saving

work. I want you all to try in the name of God and in the energy of the Holy Ghost to be the arm to gather with. "He gathereth the lambs with His arm." They are scattered now; the blood-bought, the ordained of God unto eternal life, are scattered hither and thither and know not the Lord. We are bound to gather them from all places into which they have wandered. They will not come of themselves. The mass of them despise even the outward means of grace. We want a strong arm to gather with, so that they may be compelled to come in. The church's arm is partly the ministry of the Word in her midst. Preaching should be attractive enough to gather the people together, for how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear if they will not gather around the preacher? Though certain wise persons pretend to despise the power to gather the multitudes to hear the Word, you and I need not mind their decrying it, since we shrewdly suspect that their depreciation of the gift is caused by their not possessing it themselves; the grapes are always sour if they hang above our reach. But we know who hath told us that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. If it be the gospel that is preached, we should rejoice that by any means the people can be gathered to hear it; and it is plain as a pikestaff that a part of the preacher's aim should be so to preach that men may be gathered to the hearing of it, for if he preacheth and none gather to hear, to what end doth he preach? He might as well get him away to the woods or to the wilderness and there repeat the gospel to himself in solitude, if he hath no desire that men should listen to him. The preacher's voice is to gather, but then, amid such teeming multitudes as those of London, the few preachers can never be expected to be the arm of the Lord to gather alone. We must gather the young by Sabbath-schools, and endeavor to retain them when they grow up. We must gather them by the distribution and sale of good books and other pure literature; the colporteur has, in this respect, his work to do to gather in the villages and hamlets. We must gather them by visiting from house to house; your tract distributors, your city missionaries, your Bible women, these must be the arm of the Church to gather many; but still the work will not be done unless we have more help than all these. Every Christian must be a gatherer, each one gathering his one. In the power of the Holy Spirit we must all seek out the wanderers. If you cannot bring sheaves, you must glean ear by ear; if you cannot preach to hundreds, you must endeavor to gather individuals by your holy conversation, by your pious lives, by the orderly ruling of your family, and by using every occasion that God gives you to speak a good word for Christ. *Gather.* I give you this word, all of you dear members of the

church, as your watchword. Gather ye, gather ye, gather ye the people together. Bring them in where Jesus is uplifted and His gospel sounded forth. Try and find them out in the lonely places whither they are scattered in the cloudy and dark day. There are many of you, and you can go into all sorts of nooks and corners, for you dwell in all sorts of places. Let no spot be unvisited in your mission of love. Go, ye rich, and gather in from the parlor and from the drawing-room; go, ye poor, and gather in from the cottage, and even from the work-house. Go, you who labor, and gather amongst the sons of toil; go, ye that toil not, neither do ye spin, and spend your ample leisure in winning souls from among those with whom you associate. So shall the blood-redeemed ones be fetched out and formed into a goodly flock, and Christ by you shall gather both lambs and sheep with His arm.

But the Church's second work is to carry in her bosom. Those who are brought to Christ need nurture, instruction, example, edification. "Feed my sheep," saith He; and yet again, "Feed my lambs." The preacher should try to do this, suiting his discourse to the weakest and feeblest lamb; but since he is but one, and taketh not upon himself the responsibility of others, the whole Church should try to be a nursing mother unto those who are born unto her. Beloved, carry the young converts; take the convinced of sin and pity them, cheer them, fight against their despondencies, battle with their doubts, enlighten their ignorance, and so bear them in your bosom. And then, when they begin to grow strong and work for Christ, encourage them, carry them in the bosom of your earnest prayer, asking God to make them workmen not to be ashamed, doing the Master's work right wisely and well. When they succeed in their service, carry them in the bosom of your loving admiration; and when you see them grow in grace till they are strong, carry them in the bosom of your fellowship, remembering that no child of God can afford to be unloved and lonely. Those who do not need your help will need your love; those who do not require encouragement will nevertheless be glad of your sympathy. Carry all your brothers and sisters in your bosom. You will be Christlike if you do so. It is the Church's work in this to imitate her great Lord, and let the beloved of Christ be carried in her bosom of affection. May your arm always have strength to labor, and your heart love wherewith to cherish; may this church never lack for arms that shall encompass the neighboring population, and never lack for a heart that shall be warm towards those who love our Lord Jesus Christ. Hand and heart must go together; by these two our work must be fully done. May they be both evermore in full activity, even as they are seen in Christ, our blessed exemplar.

III. We shall close with a practical word or two upon THE MODEL TEACHER. He who gathers the lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom is the model of a Sunday-school teacher. In what points? First, there should be about the teacher attractiveness in order that he may *gather*. You cannot gather hearts and spirits by force. The Board School may gather its children by law, but you must gather yours by love. You cannot keep a class of children around you by the fear of punishment. It must be by some attraction which will hold them with the cords of love and the bands of a man. Our Lord Jesus gathers with His arm because He is so full of love and of that which wins love. His character is so amiable that it draws men to it as a loadstone draws the needle. This is the arm with which He gathers. Oh, that all teachers had more of it! A little child one morning was eating her breakfast with a spoon, and the sun shone in upon her little mess of broth, and as she lifted a spoonful to her mouth she said, "Mother, what do you think? I have eaten a spoonful of sunshine." I recommend that diet to all Sunday-school teachers; take a great many spoonfuls of sunshine into your nature, and let it shine in your very face and glitter in your talk. Your Master had it. The people loved to listen to Him. They felt when they drew near to Him as if they were like a ship that had entered into port and could cast anchor. Even when they did not receive all that He said, there was a charm about His manner, His spirit and His tone. Ask, O ye teachers, ask for yourselves that God would give you that holy charm which gathers, and pray that He may deliver you from the angry spirit which scatters. Let your charm lie in this, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Carry the love of Christ with you, and you will not fail to gather the lambs with your arm.

The next thing is, after you have attracted, *uplift*. He carries the lambs in His bosom, and therefore He must lift them up. They were on the ground till He raised them. Everything about a teacher should tend to raise the children. You are to go down to the child first, and make yourself understood, but you are not to keep down, and become yourself childish. To tell children a lot of tales merely to amuse them is but to roll in the dust with the lambs, and not to carry them. You may tell the tale, and so come down to the lambs, but it must have its holy lesson with which you lift the lamb upward toward better things. Do think of this, and let your whole life act in that direction. Your example, your temper, your very dress must be a lift up for the child. How often in this evil city do home influences drag the child downward; the habits and manners and customs with which it is surrounded tend to make it grovel in the earth!

You have to lift it up, dear teacher, as the great Shepherd of the sheep did, away from its childishness, away from its worldliness (for it gets to be worldly even while a child), away from its sin, away from the corruptions of the wicked. Ask for grace that every time you see your children you may lift them up, God the Holy Spirit lifting you up all the while. Lift up your heart, or you cannot lift up your child.

The third thing to be noticed is, that when He lifted up the lamb He *laid it on His heart*. Oh, Sunday-school teacher, this is a very material point with you! If you are to bless the little ones, they must lie on your heart. You must make them feel the life of your religion—there must be a heart and a bosom to it. Let them know that there is something in your religion which looks toward them; that you love their souls, that you sorrow if they neglect the great salvation, and that you will rejoice exceedingly if they be brought to Christ. Uplift them, and then lay them on your heart, and let that heart be warm with holy love.

Next, *bear them forward*. The lamb is put into the shepherd's bosom, not that he may stand still with it all the day long, but because the sheep are going this way and the lambs must go that way too, and therefore he carries it. It is of no use to lay a child upon a cold heart; your own heart must be glowing, or it will not be a fit candle for a babe in grace; and then the bosom will be of small service unless the teacher is active as well as affectionate. A child in the bosom of a sluggish teacher will make no progress. You must be always going forward yourself if the child is to go forward with you. I do not believe that any preacher will have a growing congregation if he does not grow himself, nor will any teacher have an advancing class if he or she is not advancing too. Advance in holiness, advance in communion with Christ, advance in perfect consecration to your Lord, and as you do so the dear little children who lie in your bosom will, by God's grace, be carried with you.

The next word is, *guard* the children. Did we not say that Christ placed the lambs in His bosom to protect them? Good Sabbath-school teachers, try to keep your children out of sin and out of harm's way on week days as well as on Sundays. Spiritual teachers of the noblest order want to know what the children do on ordinary days; they try if they can to be their guardian angels from the Monday morning to the Saturday night; they never relax their endeavors to lead the children away from the terrible temptations which surround them in this huge Babylon.

The next word is *cheer*. Did I not say that the Good Shepherd laid the lamb in His bosom to keep it warm and cherish it? So should the good teacher always have a smile for the

children and a word of encouragement for them in their little life-battle, for to them it is a great one. Beloved, do all that you can to comfort the little hearts of the young converts. Help them to believe as God helpeth you. By the divine Spirit try to lead them on in holy joy as the Spirit leadeth you. So shall you be imitators of "that great Shepherd of the sheep," who

"Gently leads the wearied dam,
Gently binds the bruised limb;
And His bosom bears the lamb
Like an infant dear to Him.

"He the simplest thoughts instills,
He the mildest rules imparts,
Arms with power the weakest wills,
Fills with joy the saddest hearts."

And, last of all, *delight* in them. That tenth verse with which I shall conclude has a great charm for me. "The Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him." Well, what did He have before Him but the sheep that He went forth to find, and the lambs which He gathered and carried in His bosom? They were His work, but they were also His reward. Teachers of Sabbath-schools, your work is before you in your class; your reward is before you too. These boys and girls are to cost you service; do not grudge it, for they will be your reward. Look them in the face and know that they are immortal, and that these are they whom God is able to win for His Son through you, to be the jewels of His diadem and to be your crowns of rejoicing. The harder and more stubborn a human heart, the more honor it is to win it for the Lord Jesus. The less attention you get at first, the higher will be your reward, if, winning the attention, you shall by and by win the soul. I reckon that your Master will count you to have served Him all the more faithfully if you bring from the ragged-school the most degraded, the most ignorant, the less taught and the most depraved. To bring to Christ the children of godly parents is a thing worthy of any one's ambition; but to gather to him the children of the back slums, the children of the debauched and the depraved—this seems to me to be a more illustrious ambition still. Therefore do I say to you, as you traverse these streets of London, Christian men and women, your work is before you, your reward is before you; the teeming masses are at once your sphere of labor and your recompense. There is the soil you have to sow, and there is the harvest which you have to reap. The fields are white, but they are white for the harvest. God give you faith in the gospel that you teach, faith in the Master who taught it before you, faith in the Master who teaches it with you, and go ye forth one and all, each one according to his ability and calling, and gather with your arm, and carry in your bosom, those for whom Christ died. Amen.

The Background of Mystery.*

A SERMON

PREACHED BY **Henry Ward Beecher.**

Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him.—Eph. i.: 9, 10.

One great difficulty in understanding Paul's impassioned writings lies in the fact that when his nature kindled it moved so high into the very neighborhood of the spiritual and the invisible that in his own mind figures were obscure, and could not but be. It was one of the evidences of elevation. It brought him nearer to the preaching of Christ than any other apostle except John. It is difficult to interpret, because there are so few of us who ever rise into that region so as to be familiar with its phenomena.

In this passage Paul speaks of mystery; but what the mystery was to which he referred is only very dimly hinted at in the tenth verse—namely, the purpose of God, in the future, "To gather in one all things in Christ." You will observe how extremely vague the statement is. There are no limitations, no definitions, no specializations, no ideals, except a faint flash of foreseeing that the time was coming in which this distracted and dislocated world was to come into a perfect harmony in Jesus Christ. How that time should come, or what it should mean, he does not undertake to say. This mystery he speaks of not only here, but in many other places.

Now *mystery* means hidden things; and it therefore means unknown things. Technically, as interpreted, for instance, by the primitive Greeks, it signifies a certain form of association with things purposely hidden from the great crowd outside, though the initiated were permitted to know them; but to us generally, in our usage, *mystery* means things unknown.

Not that we are necessarily incapable of comprehending elements that belong to the great unknown; but we have not yet traveled far enough to comprehend them. Whether we fail to

* The great interest awakened by this remarkable sermon of Mr. Beecher (especially the portion relating to future punishment) has prevailed upon us to depart from our rule: not to publish in the PREACHER what has been previously published in America. We are indebted for the report of this sermon to the *Christian Union*. We must remind our readers again that the only relation we hold to the sermons we publish is that of a reporter, and we are not responsible, in any sense, for the thoughts they contain.—ED.

comprehend them because we are not sufficiently advanced, or because they are beyond the reach of finite intelligence, makes no difference. The background of all theology, as treating of the nature of God and of the divine moral government, is mystery. The abyss that lies back of human knowledge is simply infinite—an abyss of mystery.

And yet, this is the region not only where men's fancy has been the most discursive, but where men have been the most despotic. About things in regard to which we have definite knowledge men are careless; but when they have gone into a realm that is infinitely remote from their positive knowledge and where the rarest intellects are mere explorers in the night, as it were, there they have made faith in abstract doctrines to be the most cogent, determinative of moral character, and the condition of religious organization. On the nature of God, the methods of divine moral government, the great destinies of the future—subjects about which men know the least, the slightest aberration is counted damnatory. In one period of the world it was punished with physical pains and penalties; in our time it is punished only with moral pains and penalties—the transgressors being marked in order that they may be disesteemed by the faithful.

Men learn, and *must* learn, of God, of the divine government, and of the future, through their own experience. There is a species of anthropomorphism which is the indispensable door or avenue to knowledge on these subjects. It implies that men's essential faculties are, not in scope or perfectness, but in quality, the same as the divine attributes. If you deny this, you deny all possible knowledge of the invisible realm. They do deny it who embrace materialism in its various forms. They say that God is unknowable. But if God is unknowable, then to all practical intents He does not exist. That view is practical Atheism. Not to poetic natures; but we are not all poetic natures. A poetic nature, though he may not know about God, may have a consciousness of the great "over-soul"; but most folks are not poets.

And as to loving a God that is inconceivable, unthinkable, unknowable—it is preposterous. A morning-glory wants something that is solid to run up on. It wants to twine; but it will not twine on a shadow. It must have something that is substantial to twine on. Human nature, too, must have something substantial to twine on. And if you proclaim an immanent divinity, a kind of soul of the world, that has reason, though not anything that we understand by reason, that has justice, though not anything that we understand by justice, and that has goodness, though not anything that we understand by goodness, what a confusion you throw men into! If when I say, "I love the truth," there is no correspondence

between my sense of truth and truth as it exists in God, then the term "truth" is perpetually binding and enslaving me.

What if men should employ terms of description in this way? Suppose we should say to a child, "I am going to take you to your grandfather's, and you are going to see a most magnificent horse, only that it is not like any horse that you ever saw. It has no eyes, no ears, no mouth, no legs, no mane, no tail, and no skin and bones; but it is a horse. And a saddle will be put on him; but it is not a leather saddle, and it has no stirrups, and its framework is not like that of any saddle that you ever saw; but it is a saddle!" What sort of a horse would that be that had neither legs, nor eyes, nor mouth, nor ears, nor mane, nor tail? And what sort of a saddle would that be that had no stirrups, that was not made of leather, and that differed in its framework from all other saddles? It would simply be cheating the child to tell him of such a horse and such a saddle.

And to say that justice in the Divine nature does not answer to our conception of justice, and that truth in its quality and essential nature is one thing in God and another thing in men, is to falsify the whole sphere of human nature. It is true that the wisdom of God, in so far as purity and extent are concerned, is very different from our wisdom, just as the experience of a wise father is vastly greater than the intellectual operations of his little child; nevertheless, the little boy of four years old, on his father's knee, has the same quality of thinking that the father has, although in the father it has grown and ripened to a degree that the child cannot comprehend. Notwithstanding the difference which exists as to development, there is identity of substantial radical quality.

Therefore, in order that men may have a conception of a personal God, it must be assumed that their essential moral faculties and intellectual structure constitute a just foundation for a comparison with the ideas which they form of God. Our conception of what is true may not be so large as the whole truth, and not as fine as the highest truth, but it differs from conception of truth in its fullest and most perfect form only as the taper differs from the sun. The difference is not in quality, but in degree or extent. No man would hold a candle out of the window and say that it was sunrise; nevertheless, the fire in the candle and the fire in the sun are the same in their essential nature, though they are not the same in magnitude, nor the same in power of heat or illumination.

The same is true in regard to the Divine nature, the foundation, and the only foundation, for understanding which lies in a species of regulated anthropomorphism—the teaching of God in man, or human life, which is the signification of the term. But this, of course, is subject, as I have already intimated, to the perpetual correction which lies in the thought

that while we have elementary faculties and feelings which define for us the Divine nature, those same feelings and faculties exist in God in such rarity, in such scope, in such combinations, and they act after methods that so transcend their action when limited to an organization of the flesh, that there is always a vast background of mystery beyond them. We know, as it were, the alphabet of the Divine nature; but the library, the literature, the learning of the Divine nature we do not know. That lies back of all our possible thought when we are thinking toward God. We strike the elemental forms of the nature of God, and gain some definite conception of what is mercy, of what is gentleness, of what is love. When we have gained this conception we have only gained so large a conception as is possible to the limited operation of those elements in human conditions; but God is free from such conditions; He stands above them and beyond them; and in Him those qualities take on forms so large and so intense that, after all, the background of every one of our thoughts in respect to the nature of God and the divine moral government is simply untraceable by human imagination or thought. The mystery of which the Bible so often speaks—the mystery of holiness; the mystery of the mercy of God, through which He is going to include all Gentiles as well as Jews in His Church; the mystery which is spoken of in the text, of “gathering together in one all things in Christ”—all things in the heaven above, on the earth beneath, under the earth and throughout the universe—this mystery coheres with that philosophical principle which I have stated to you.

Consider, for a moment, what there is in the teachings of the Word of God which transcends human experience. Spirit-life must be incomprehensibly different from life in the body; and yet you will take notice that whenever spirit-life is interpreted to us by spiritual teachers it is done by bringing back to us human forms, human thought and human action. The whole literature and lore of spiritualism, in our day, is a confession that men cannot understand spirit. It frees man from bodily conditions, and throws him into a higher sphere by imagination; but then he is just the same that he was, only he seems to be made up of cloud instead of good, honest flesh and bones; and he thinks, and hears, and feels, and talks, and walks just as he did before.

Swedenborg has a whole world in which men are divided into classes, tribes, groups, in the other spheres, and all goes on there as it does here, except that they have a sort of effluent bodies—bodies that you can see through, as it were. Diaphanous, translucent creatures they are, with material bodies of a little finer form than those which they inhabited on earth, though substantially the same. So nearly identical are they with their

former selves that their very mistakes and errors have come with them. Now and then Swedenborg hits the truth exactly. He relates that in one of his visions he saw in heaven, or rather in the other life, a man who had been dead twenty years and did not yet know it! It goes far to confirm my faith in Swedenborg, for I see such men among us in our day. They are dead, and have been for years, and do not know it, though everybody else knows it! According to Swedenborg, the other life is a reproduction of this life, with merely a little poetic fringe about it.

A man never understands anything of which something has not been in him. Of everything that we can comprehend there is the germ, the possibility, the potential cause in ourselves; and beyond that we cannot go in this state of being. You can think of a spirit as you can think of a dream, or as you think of a cloud which is rarefied and made so tenuous that it just appears, so that a little light comes from it to the physical eye; but the moment you think of a thing which is so tenuous that you cannot see it, it is gone; rather, you cannot think of such a thing. The moment that, in your conception of existence, you come to that which your senses cannot interpret, that moment it vanishes from your sight and eludes you. The whole philosophy and art of spiritualizing consists in selecting such forms of matter as are the least opaque and cumbersome, and that have the most of levity, of lightness and of conspicuity in them; but they are all radicated in matter; they all come from matter and go back to it; and to conceive of absolute, pure spiritual existence, even in saint or angel or divinity, transcends the power of any human intellect.

The conditions of spiritual life are relative to those of time by reason of the limitations of matter. Divisions of time were invented to express the succession of events. Abstractly, time has no existence. It only exists as we can measure it by seconds and minutes, and hours and days, and months and years. Time is marked by interspaces between positive occurrences. It is nothing but interspaces which separate events or phenomena. Men live under the operations of time because they live in the realm of matter, where things are measured by intervals between fact and fact. Time is calculated according to the motion of the moon around the earth, according to the motion of the earth around the sun, and according to the motion of the sun around, I know not what—the center of some other great system (for the sun is as busy as the earth). To us time is real, because we are in the realm of matter; but if we were in the spirit-life it would not necessarily follow that we would be cognizant of time. We do not know that there is in the other world any such time regulated with interspaces as that which exists among us here on earth. To God a thou-

sand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years.

According to the very terms by which spirit is defined, it is something antithetical to matter. Men that are in a state of limitation by reason of the flesh, and that are under the dominion of ideas caused by the mutations of matter, are limited by necessities that presumptively do not exist in the other life. So when we come to judge of things which belong to the upper realm by our lower and crude measures; when we bring to the infinite superiorities of the other life measures that belong only to the elements of time, to the transient and to the visible, we do that which is not warranted by the existing condition of things. The point of view on the part of men and the point of view on the part of God, as revealed in the truth of Scripture, are such that we are liable to fall into continual mistakes. If you suppose that when God, who knows all things in their infinite relations and not in their limited time relations, who sees the end from the beginning, who lives in a largeness of which we have no conception, who is in a sphere removed infinitely further from us than we are from the beetle that burrows under the leaves, or that comes out at night from under the bark—if you suppose that when He attempts to teach men who are shut up to matter, enclosed in the flesh, He will address them from His standpoint, you have no true conception of the Divine procedure. His standpoint of truth is one and ours is another; and we must judge by that which is taught us in our circumscribed sphere, in the realm of our limited knowledge, while He judges by His boundless knowledge in a sphere which is no less in extent than the universe itself. Though it may be compatible for us to have the beginnings of an understanding of the Divine nature, it is impossible for us to have such a conception of it as God Himself has. The difference between a pure spirit in the spiritual realm and a soul in the body, surrounded by immutable physical laws, is one which leads to endless mistakes, unless we are willing to accept rudimentary, alphabetic ideas with humility. And yet it is on these very points that men insist on the perfection of their knowledge with the most ferocious confidence.

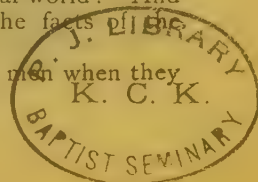
If you undertake to deny the Trinity—in which I believe; if you undertake to deny the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, three persons in one Godhead, what an uproar you make in the church! Men say, "If you do not believe in that fundamental doctrine you must go out, and go out at once!" As if any human being, whether St. Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, or the farthest-reaching mind that ever lived, when he came to a measurement of the Divine Being, was competent to understand anything about it!

You may say, "How do you believe it, then?" I believe it

in this way: I find it easier to accept the statement or theory of the New Testament, that there is an invisible, a mysterious, union of three persons in one Godhead, than to adopt any other view. But if you ask me a step beyond that I cannot answer you. When I strain my thought to look into this subject, I can see analogies which point toward Trinity in unity. I see that being begins at unity, and goes on, by multiplication both of organs and functions, until there is an animal system that is more or less complex; that when you rise to human beings there is not simply one faculty, and there are not merely single faculties, but there are groups of faculties superinduced one over another; that there are animal passions and social affections, and moral sentiments, and over them all imagination and reason; and as the last of these stages is a vast reach from the beginning, so I can conceive that the same tendency may go on beyond this world, units and groups being combined to form personalities, and they in time combined in One Being. I can understand that this mode of development has not exhausted itself in men, and that it may go forward into the other life, and that there may be not only groups of faculties, but groups of personalities. The thing is distinctly "thinkable," according to the German phrase. Therefore I am not turned back from believing in the Trinity on account of the impossibility of my comprehending it. When you ask me as to the *quo modo*, the method, of the Trinity, I am obliged to confess that I do not understand it. But should this be a bar to my going into the church? A certain phrase of orthodoxy says, "You must subscribe to the Trinity, or not come into the church." What is the law on which it proceeds, and by which it judges a man? Is it simplicity? Is it transparency? Is it loveliness? Is it that on which the fifth chapter of Matthew is founded? No. Men go into the most unfathomable realms of human thought, take the most difficult of all conceivable speculations, and make them the condition of church membership; and if a man believes in them he may be in the church, but if he does not believe in them he shall not be in the church.

Take, again, the element of Time. When God speaks of the duration of His own nature, are we to suppose that our limited notions of time are fit instruments for the interpretation of it? Is it to be presumed that a man understands exactly what time means in heaven because he understands what time means on earth? Is it to be taken for granted that he knows what the measurements are in the spiritual realm because he knows what they are in this material world? And yet how positively men claim to understand the facts of Eternal and the Infinite?

But there is no accounting for the folly of men when they



have undertaken to regulate other men's consciences and beliefs. When a man thinks that he is a celestial hound set on the track of heresy, with his nose for a conscience, and scents his prey afar off, and starts off with tail up and ears set, farewell sense, farewell honor, farewell humanity, farewell everything!

This exceeding difference which exists between the truth as it is seen from the spirit side, or the side of perfection, and as it is seen from the human side, that is relative and imperfect, throws light on many dark problems of life and thought.

First. One of the corroborative testimonies of the divinity of Christ is afforded by a consideration of this difference. The teaching of Christ, especially as it is represented in John (not exclusively, for there are traces of the same thing in all the Evangelists, but in John it is more marked than anywhere else), is mystical, as it is said. It is mystical, at any rate, in the sense that it is a teaching which brings into view both the elements that belong to the upper sphere and those that belong to the lower sphere. It is the teaching of one who has the knowledge that is of the heavenly sphere, but who is engaged in the conditions of men on earth. He finds difficulty in expressing his thoughts in human language, and still more difficulty in making it palpable to those to whom he speaks.

Therefore, you find in the teaching of Christ paradoxes and forms of statements that, so far as exact truth is concerned, are extravagances which go beyond the point of our thought and experience. Especially you will find in His teaching fictions; for it is a truth that, in the lower sphere of human life, not unfrequently falsity addressed to the imagination is more true than truth itself. The evolution of truth in the human family on earth has been through fictions. Frequently, to state the truth exactly is to lie, and to state it without a particle of coherence to real facts is to tell the truth.

For instance, you want to produce in your child's mind a conception of justice, and you make animals talk. You say: "There was a lion—one of those *good* lions, my dear; and he was walking one day in the woods; and what did he see? He saw a poor little innocent lamb by a stream; and there was a wolf—a bad wolf—and the wolf was saying to the little lamb, 'What are you drinking out of this stream for?' and the little lamb said, 'I did not know I was doing any harm.' 'Yes,' said the wolf, 'you did know that you were doing harm, too, and I will tear you all to pieces.' And the lion walked up and said to the wolf, 'Stop! you shall not hurt that lamb; he has rights as well as you;' and the lamb was saved."

Thus you show the child how a just monarch protects innocence on the one side from craft and violence on the other. Yet there was never a lion that did so, and never a wolf that

stopped to argue with a lamb before eating it up. He addresses his victims not with his tongue, but with his teeth. But that fiction conveys to a child's mind a vivid conception, such as you could never give him by any abstract statement of equity between man and man, between the strong and the weak, between the high and the low.

And Christ employed that mode of teaching. He taught by fiction. His parables are pictures addressed to the imagination; and they produce in the minds of men more correct impressions of the truth than any mere statements of fact could produce. There is a constant play in Christ's teaching between light and dark, between knowing and not knowing, between the infinite and the limited.

Now, if Christ was only a great man, we should not expect that to be the mode of the working of His mind. We should not expect that there would be this play in His teaching. You do not see it in the writings of Goethe or Shakespeare, except when they are describing it in others as the fruit and product of inspiration. If the Lord Jesus Christ had squared and jointed everything by rule and law it might have been said, there is one who works like a man in the limitations of the earthly sphere. But He does not; He acts as one who is subject to limitation, and recognizes it; He has mystery above Him, and speaks truths that are out of our reach; He gives evidence in His appearance, in His conversation and in His discourses of being one who is familiar with the upper, spiritual and invisible sphere, and who is attempting, by His life and teaching, to interpret it in the lower, physical and visible sphere. So there is in the life of Christ a manifestation of divinity; a double consciousness; a sense of things in this world, and a sense of things infinitely beyond this world, with thoughts and feelings playing back and forth between heaven and earth, like a shuttle in a loom carrying a golden thread, the upper part of the fabric being invisible, and only the lower part, where it touches Him, being visible.

Second. This difference between the spiritual and the earthly point of view affords a partial solution of and relief from many of those questions which trouble men, and which have troubled me exceedingly.

Do you think because I preach positively that I have no doubts? Oh! what nights I have gone through! What uncertainties! What jeopardies! I understand what Paul meant when he said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable." My head has reeled. And yet I am put here of God not to blench. Wherever men think, there I am bound to think. Wherever men forge weapons to destroy the faith of man in God and virtue, I am bound to know of what material those weapons are made, and whether they have celestial or infernal temper.

To part with many cherished associations of youth; to see the truth as the blind man saw men, "as trees walking"; to perceive a thing to be true and not to know, if you teach it, what will become of the morality of the generation; to feel the responsibility that lies on a man who loves his kind and his God—this is a preparation which perhaps no man would covet, but it is a preparation which few who are going to teach the way of God to men can avoid.

The law of the universe is *suffering*. There is no mother who does not suffer for her child. There is no child that has a good send-off in this world without being made to suffer. No man can accomplish that which benefits the ages and not suffer. Discoverers do not reap the fruit of what they discover. Reformers are pelted and beaten. Men who think in advance of their time are persecuted. Men who would lead the flock must fight the wolf.

It is not an easy thing, then, for a man to preach the gospel in regard to uncertainties. There is great joy in preaching, to be sure; but it has its difficulties. It is a hard matter to take out rotten timbers and replace them with sound ones, and not stop the onward course of the ship. One is often sorely perplexed as to what he ought to preach and what he ought not to preach. Some men make easy work of it by saying, "Whatever is in you to-day give it out to-day, and what is in you to-morrow give out to-morrow, and let Providence take care of the result." It is as if a doctor should say to a mother, "Let the children take medicines just as it happens. If the first thing they get hold of is quinine, let them take that; or if it is corrosive sublimate, let them take that, and you will find out whether it is good for them or not, and so will they." What sort of advice would that be?

There are a great many slumbering ministers who do not have any trouble; but their people are full of trouble. There come to laymen questions which they cannot solve, and they are like persons groping in dark passages. For the most part they go with their mouths shut. If now and then one ventures to come to his minister, he is told, "You are straying into by and forbidden paths. Let such matters alone and attend to your duties." That is all very well, provided one can do it. If a man has no wings, he can; but if a man has wings, he will fly. You cannot make an eagle run round and round a barnyard like a hen. Men who have minds of their own will think; and when they think, is there to be nobody to interpret their thoughts to them?

Do you say that this is unsettling? So it is; but experience unsettles more than teaching does. Life beating on human nature unsettles men. Oftentimes the foundations are undermined, and the tower falls before it is known that the mischief

is being wrought. Do you say that it leaves all religious truth nebulous, mystical, uncertain, dependent on feeling, and mood, and mental and spiritual temperament and development? In the sphere of the eternities religious truth is nebulous and mystical; it has a deep background of mystery; but it is not so in the sphere of time and earth.

The New Testament Scriptures are indefinite when they are teaching of things invisible and ineffable; but yet when they teach of things visible and tangible, of things within the bounds of time, they are not indefinite. Take the personal duties of men. Collect all the teachings of the New Testament on the subject of personal morality, and you will find that there is not a link missing; every stone of the arch is there; the structure is perfect. The duties of patience, of forbearance, of honor, of justice, of truth between man and man; the duty of submitting one to another; the duty of the strong to put themselves under the weak, that the weak may rely on them; the duties of philanthropical benevolence; the whole round of duties such as these are as clear in the Word of God as the angles of a crystal. There is not, after two thousand years of study and experience, a book of ethics that can for one moment equal the New Testament in the lucidity with which it teaches social duties.

Now, compare the teachings of the New Testament of things in the spiritual realm with its teachings of things in the physical realm, and see how different they are. They differ from each other as much as clouds differ from corn, or wheat, or granite rocks, or stone walls. The teaching of the Bible in regard to civic duties is perfectly clear and understandable. The coherence of its ethics on the subject of personal duties is perfect, is without a flaw. But, on the other hand, the presentation in the Scriptures of the spirituality of the Christian faith is like the cope of heaven above the solid earth, which is real, but which is separated from us by vast spaces, and is removed far beyond any power of comprehension which is given to mortals in this lower sphere. The one we are to understand. We are to recognize the background of mystery in the other.

Third. Consider more in detail a single phase of religious doubt and difficulty in the light of this essential difference between the spiritual and the earthly sides.

It seems to many men very strange that the world was created as it was. To many men it seems very strange that the human race were created on a scale so vast and with so little provision for their development. It is said in the catechism that our first parents were created righteous; that they fell from their original state, and that their posterity fell with them. Science teaches us that the human race sprang, I will not say how far back, but certainly as far back as the savage condition.

This is the modern testimony of science, and it is not contradicted by the catechism. So far the catechism and science agree.

Now, that the race should be put in this world at so low a point would not be strange any more than it is strange that a man cuts a little twig off from a rose-bush and puts it in a thumb-pot one inch across, and sets it on a table in a propagating house, with bottom heat, if the moral problem were the same as the physical one—where there is the instrumentality for germinating the twig, where there is a gardener to take care of it, to shift it, to develop it, to give it room and opportunity for growth and maturity. But that has not been the history of the human race. Mankind are thrown abroad on this continent in myriads, and we know that not only their happiness but their morality largely depends on their knowledge of how to use their bodies, and how to control the natural laws that surround them; but on these subjects not a word nor a syllable is told them. It is said that there is a revelation from God; but we should expect, if God has made a revelation to the nascent race, that He would have told them how they are made, what connection there is between their faculties, and what relation they sustain to the world outside of them; but they went on propagating one thousand years, two thousand years, three thousand years, without receiving any such information. The sweep of the populations that have swarmed on the globe is simply inconceivable. Not all the waves of the ocean that have beaten on its shores during all the centuries of time contained drops enough to equal the number of human beings that have come into this world and gone through life throbbing, striving, blundering, and died and passed out of sight. So many have there been that all the sands of the seashore, all the stars of heaven and all the figures of arithmetic would not be enough to measure the preface even of the book of the history of the creation of the race. And during three-fourths of its history the race was without an altar, or a church, or an authorized priest, a revelation, or anything but the light of nature.

If now you tell me that this great mass of men, because they had not the knowledge of God, went to heaven, I say that the inroad of such a vast amount of mud swept into heaven would be destructive of its purity, and I cannot accept that view. If, on the other hand, you say that they went to hell, then you make an infidel of me; for I do swear, by the Lord Jesus Christ, by His groans, by His tears, and by the wounds in His hands and in His side, that I will never let go of the truth that the nature of God is to suffer for others rather than to make them suffer. If I lose everything else, I will stand on the sovereign idea that God so loved the world that He gave His own Son

to die for it rather than it should die. Tell me that back of Christ there is a God who for unnumbered centuries has gone on creating men and sweeping them like dead flies—nay, like living ones—into hell, is to ask me to worship a being as much worse than the conception of any mediæval devil as can be imagined; but I will not worship the devil, though he should come dressed in royal robes and sit on the throne of Jehovah. I will *not* worship cruelty. I *will* worship Love—that sacrifices itself for the good of those that err, and that is as patient with them as a mother is with a sick child. With every power of my being will I worship a God of love such as that.

But has not God justice also? and is He not of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Yes. And the distinctions between right and wrong are as eternal as God Himself. The relation between sin and retribution belongs not to the mere temporal condition of things; it inheres in the Divine constitution, and is for all eternity. The prospect for any man who goes out of this life resolute in sin may well make him tremble for himself, and may well make us tremble for him. But it is not true—the Scripture does not teach it, and the whole sense of human justice revolts at it—that for the myriads who have been swept out of this life without the light and knowledge of the Divine love there is reserved an eternity of suffering. In that mystery of the divine will and work of which the apostle speaks, in the far-off dispensation of the fullness of times, there is some other solution than this nightmare of a mediæval theology.

“Well, then,” it is asked, “how do you get rid of the difficulty that there is this population on the globe, and that they have been living in such a deplorable state so long?” How is it that a world so full of suffering should be continued under the administration of a parental God of infinite wisdom and infinite power, who could, if He would, change it all? The history of the evolution of the human race upon the earth, as described by the apostle, has been, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now.” When the acute moral and benevolent sympathies of the soul are laid bare to the vast proportions of the race, and to the rain of sorrows that pour down like a tropical deluge, and to the gulf streams of misery that flow through time; when one considers, not what is the condition of things about him in Christian families, but what is the condition of the human race; when one does that by the human race which Christ did—joins himself to it and comes into sympathy with its whole throbbing and groaning life, then the question of reconciliation with the Divine love is one that must be answered. Either God does not exist, or He has not the power, as Mill says He has not, to do what He pleases, or else Infinite benevolence has a wider, larger, grander

scope than we are accustomed to imagine. If we look at the phenomenon of suffering from the earthly point of view, and with the limitation of our faculties, and from our limited knowledge of moral uses and ways, darkness and doubt are not only extremely natural, but inevitable. But if it is true that all this vast multitude of human creatures are in the garden of the Lord, and that they are being treated according to their various conditions, and that they are to have some chances besides those which they have on earth, that they are to go up through other schools than those of time, then the whole aspect of the case is changed. That which makes the dealing to which the race are subjected so hard to bear is not that some men are ignorant (we are all ignorant), or that they are limited (we are all limited), but that they are seemingly neglected, and are denied such opportunities as we enjoy. It is this that makes the phenomenon of the world such as to stagger strong men, and make impossible, to many, faith in the loving, self-sacrificing nature of God. Take away the doctrine of the finality of things at death, conceive a final end to be accomplished by all this misery in the universe, and that it will be so transcendent that when you come to see the outcome of it all the foregoing suffering will be seen to have been insignificant, not worthy to be compared with the eternal weight of glory produced by it, and the trouble ceases.

Once, when a boy, I stood on Mount Pleasant, at Amherst, and saw a summer thunder-storm enter the valley of the Connecticut from the north. Before it all was bright; centerwise it was black as midnight, and I could see fiery streaks of lightning striking down through it; but behind it again—for I could see the rear—it was bright. In front of me was that mighty storm hurtling through the sky; and before it I saw the sunlight, and behind it I saw the sunlight; but to those that were under the center of it there was no brightness before or behind it. They saw the thunder-gust and felt the pelting rain, and were enveloped in darkness, and heard the rush of mighty winds; but I, that stood afar off, could see that God was watering the earth and washing the leaves and preparing the birds for a new outcome of jubilee, and giving to men refreshment and health. So I conceive that our human life here, with its sorrows and tears, as compared with the eternity that we are going into, is no more than the breath of a summer thunder-storm; and if God sees that our experience in this world is to work out an exceeding great reward in the world to come, there is no mystery in it—to Him.

Then next will come the question, Why were there such long delays on the part of God in making known the way of salvation to the world? And here may be propounded, with great fitness and power, the inquiry, What do you mean by delay?

The child is fevered, and, hardly knowing what it does, it says, "Mother, give me some water;" and the mother rises to get the water; and it says, "Quick! quick!" and thinks she delays, though she does not; and this thought in the mind of the child is relative to the soreness of its nerves. And even when the mother does delay, it is because she thinks delay is best for the child. It seems hard to the child, but the mother knows it is wise.

Now, what is time to men is not time to God. As we have but threescore and ten or fourscore of years to live, and as we have much to do, and as what we accomplish must be crowded into those years, we are in a hurry; but God dwells in eternity, He has time enough, He never needs to hurry; and that which, because we are in physical conditions, seems to us delay is not delay to the Divine mind. In the vast scheme according to which He works, a million years, or ten million years, do not seem long to Him; nor will they seem long to us when we are on the other side. The trouble with us is that we are bringing time-measures and flesh-measures to bear on themes to which only spirit-measures are adapted. But the great background of mystery comes in for our consolation; and it matters not if the race have been here twenty or thirty thousand years, provided they are going forward on a system which will in the end bring all things in heaven and on earth into one in Christ Jesus. This thought takes out of human life that bitter element which carries poison through it from end to end. The sense of divine universal justice, confidence in God, the feeling which enables one to say, "Wait, Lord, as long as thou wilt: if a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night, then let a thousand years measure the periods of human ascendancy; only, in the far future, when the world that has groaned and travailed in pain so long shall have forgotten the cries of sorrow and sighing, and learned the notes of gladness and joy, and at last the ransomed of the Lord shall have returned and come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy upon their heads, then let every sentient creature, in heaven, on earth and under the earth, join the shining crowd, and lift up his voice and help to swell the triumphant chorus that shall fill the infinite space of heaven"—*that confidence takes away, with me, the mystery of the slow and long-delayed operations of this mortal life.*

A child at the foot of a mountain and the father at the top cannot see alike. The child is embosomed in shrubs and trees, and is enveloped in darkness; and the sun comes up in the valley where he is long after it strikes the mountain-top; and it passes from the child's sight far earlier than it does from the father's; and the view of the surrounding country which the child gets down there is not to interpret that which the father

gets up there. So our conception of finite love is not to interpret God's conception of infinite love. Why, what is love? What do we know about it? With us it appears as self-love; and with us at best it is restricted and imperfect. It is most beautiful, to be sure; yet it is uncrowned. But what is the love of the Infinite? What is love to a heart that can take in ages and the race? What is that love which is unfathomable, and which includes infinite tenderness and infinite compassion?

Said Christ, as he bent to wash the disciples' feet, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." When He stoops and lifts out of the cradle my beloved child and disappears from the door, I hear the whisper in the hush of the air, "What I am doing you know not now, but you shall know hereafter." When His hand separates between husband and wife, and one stands, like Niobe, in utter woe, from overhead comes down a voice saying, "What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter."

We are told, "All things work together for good to them that love God;" and, "No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." These assurances take away the mystery of life. The mystery of the life to come cures the mystery of this life. The unknowable and inexplicable there sends explanation and definition back here. And we can say with the apostle, "We walk by faith, not by sight." We live not by sense, nor by sensuous reason. We are children of the Ineffable and the Invisible. And Christ says to us, "In my Father's house are many mansions (apartments); I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And then there is that other love token: "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end."

Even so, Lord Jesus of love, we are patient, we are contented with weariness, and we count all things blessing which shall bring us finally to thy presence and to the joy of the heavenly land.

Eternal Punishment.*

A SERMON

PREACHED BY F. W. FARRAR, D.D. (CANON OF WESTMINSTER), IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 11, 1877.

For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead.—1 Peter iv : 6.

WHEN I spoke from this place last Sunday on the question, "Is life worth living?"—when I preached three Sundays ago on heaven, some of you may possibly have thought, "This is all very well for true Christians—all very well if, in this world, there were only saints; but the saints are few in number, and the world is full of sinners. See what a spectacle it presents! Look at the coarseness and the foulness exhibited at every turn in the streets around us! Walk at night in squalid purlieus, not far even from this Abbey, where glaring gin-palaces are busy, and, amid the reek of alcohol, you may hear snatches of foul oaths and odious songs—streets where women sit shuddering in wretched garrets, to think of the brutal hands that will strike, of the brutal feet that will kick them when the drunkard staggers home, and where the young lads of the schools, over which we spend so many millions of money, are being daily ruined and depraved by being lured into low haunts of gambling and degradation. Or walk, again, in the thronged haunts of commerce, where myriads are utterly and recklessly absorbed in that hasting to be rich which shall not be innocent; or judge, from the stage and the opera, that vice in higher places is none the less dangerous because it is more gilded and perfumed. Look at all these facts, and then tell us—not in an ideal world, but in this world which looks too often as though it were a world without souls—in a world where there is so much of cruel selfishness, of degraded purpose, of serpentine malice and insane desire—oh! tell us, in such a world as this, how does all this that you have said apply? Alas! the vast majority of men and women whom we see are not saints but sinners, and too often contented with their sins, and living in their sins and covetousness and drunkenness and lust, and lying and dishonesty and hatred, claim each their multitudes of votaries and of victims. Have you, then, any right to paint the world in rose color? Is it not mere insincerity, mere clericalism, to shut your eyes to patent

* This sermon of Canon Farrar has created a great stir throughout England because of its assault on the doctrine of Endless Punishment. We intended to publish in this number a sermon affirmative of the doctrine, but were delayed in securing copy. It will appear in our next issue.—ED.

facts? We who, by our very presence in this sacred place, show that we do not belong to the classes openly and flagrantly irreligious, are yet, many of us, great sinners. Even when there is no dread crime upon our consciences, many of us are far from God. Our hearts are stained through and through by evil passions. We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins. You bid us repent; but how many do repent? You, the clergy, who stand often by the bedsides of the dying, who know how men live, and that in nine cases out of ten they die as they have lived, if your theory of life is to be entertained, if it is not to be a mere professional sham, what do you think about the future? Tell us about the lost."

My brethren, you have the fullest right to ask these questions, and it is our bounden duty to answer them; and I, for one, in all deep humility, yet now and always asking God for fearless courage and perfect honesty, will try to give you such answer as I can. If it be but the fragment of an answer, it is because I believe it to be God's will that no other should be possible; but, at least, I shall strive to speak such truth as is given me, and to answer no man according to his idols. Those who take loose conjectures for established certainties, those who care more for authority than for reason and conscience, those who pretend to dignify with the name of Scriptural argument the ever-widening spirals of dim and attenuated inference out of the narrow aperture of single texts, those who talk with the glib self-complacency of an ignorance which takes itself for knowledge, as though they alone had been admitted into what, with unconscious blasphemy, they call the council-chamber of the Trinity, they, perhaps, may speak readily of fire and brimstone, and may feel the consolatory glow of a personal security as they dilate upon the awfulness and the finality of the sufferings of the damned. But those whose faith must have a broader basis than hollow representation—than the ambiguousness of opposing texts; those who grieve over the dark shadows flung by human theologians over God's light; those who believe that reason and conscience and experience, no less than Scripture, are also books of God, and that they, too, must have a direct voice in these great decisions, they will not be so ready to snatch God's thunder into wretched and feeble hands. They will lay their mouths in the dust rather than make sad the hearts which God hath not made sad. They will take into account the grand principles which dominate through Scripture, no less than its isolated expressions; and, undeterred by the base and feeble notion that virtue would be impossible without the horrors of an endless hell, they will declare their trust that even after death, through the infinite mercy of the loving Father, the dead shall be alive again, and multitudes, at any rate, of the lost be found.

I cannot pretend, my brethren, to exhaust in one sermon a question on which, as you know, whole volumes have been written. There are some of the young in this congregation—many of you, I regret to see, are standing. I am reluctant ever to trespass too long upon your attention, and I cannot, therefore, profess to-day to meet and to silence all objections. But one thing I can do, which is to tell you plainly what, after years of thought on the subject, I believe, and what I know to be the belief of multitudes, and of yearly-increasing multitudes, of the wisest and most learned in our Church. What the popular notion of hell is, you, my brethren are all aware. Many of us were scared with it in our childhood. It is that the moment a human being dies, at whatever age, under whatever disadvantages, his fate is sealed hopelessly and forever; and that, if he die in unrepented sin, that fate is a never-ending agony, amid physical tortures the most frightful that can be imagined; so that, when we think of the future of the human race, we must conceive of a vast and burning prison in which the lost souls of millions writhe and shriek forever, tormented in a flame that never will be quenched. You have only to read the manuals—you have only to look at the pictures—of the Roman Catholics on the one hand and of Nonconformists on the other, to see that such has been and is the common belief of Christendom. You know how Dante, in his vision, comes to a dark wall of rock, and sees, blacker in the blackness, the chasm of hell's colossal portal, and over it, in characters of gloom, the awful line, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." And how, passing through it, they reach a place where, in this mere vestibule, sighs and wailings tremble through the starless void, and the sound of voices, deep and hoarse, and hands smitten wildly together, whirl always through that stained and murky abode. But it is even more awful to find these things in our own great writers, who had no belief, like Dante, in that willing agony of purgatory into which poor souls might gladly plunge, assured that they, too, redeemed and purified, should at last pass into their paradisaal rest. Read how the great Milton, after telling us of the super-eminence of beatific vision, plunges at once into this dreadful sentence—that "they who have been wicked in high places, after a shameful end in this life, which God grant them, shall be thrown down eternally into the deepest and darkest gulf of hell, where, under the trample and spurn of all the other damned, and in the anguish of their torture, they shall have no other ease than to exercise a bestial tyranny over them. They shall remain in that plight forever, the basest, the low-est, the most dejected, the most underfoot and down-trodden vassals of perdition." Or read Bishop Jeremy Taylor's sermon on Christ's advent to judgment, and see how his im-

agination revels in the Tartarean glare which he pours over his lurid page, as he tells us how God's hand shall press the sins, and the intolerableness, the amazement and the disorder, the smart and the sorrow, and the guilt and the pain of all our sins, and pour them into one chalice, and mingle them with an infinite wrath, and make the wicked drink off all the vengeance, and force it down their unwilling throats with the violence of devils and accursed spirits. Or, once more, read in Henry Smith, the silver-tongued Platonist of Cambridge, how, "when iniquity hath played her part, all the furies of hell shall leap on the man's heart as on a stage. Thought calleth to fear, fear whistleth to horror, horror beckoneth to despair, and saith, 'Come, and help me to torment this sinner.' Irons are laid upon his body like a prisoner. All his lights are put out at once." Can we wonder that, receiving and believing such doctrines as these, one of our poets wrote:

"Place me alone in some frail boat,
Amid the horrors of an angry sea,
Where I, while time may move, shall float,
Despairing neither land nor day.
Or under earth my youth confine
To the night and silence of a call,
Where scorpions with my limbs may twine,
O God, so Thou forgive me hell,"

Or that Shakespeare exclaims:

"'Tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed earthly life,
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we dream of death."

Well, my brethren, happily the thoughts and hearts of men are often far gentler and nobler than the formulæ of their creeds; and custom and tradition prevent even the greatest from facing the full meaning and consequences of the words they use. When Milton talks as I have read to you of hell, he is but giving form and color to his burning hatred of irresponsible tyranny and triumphant wrong; and when Jeremy Taylor and other great thinkers and poets write thus of it, they give us but the ebullient flashes from the glowing cauldron of a kindled imagination. What they say is but, as it were, the poetry of indignation. It is only when these topics fall into the vulgar handling of hard and narrow bigots—it is only when they reek like acrid fumes from the poisoned crucible of mean and loveless hearts, that we see them in all their intolerable ghastliness. I know nothing so calculated to make the whole soul revolt with loathing from every doctrine of religion as the easy complacency with which some cheerfully accept the belief that they are living and moving in the midst of millions doomed irreversibly to everlasting perdition. Augustine dared

to say that infants dying unbaptized would certainly be damned, though only with *ævisissime diminutio*. Thomas Aquinas lent his saintly name to the abominable fancy that the bliss of the saved may be the more keen because they are permitted to gaze on the punishment of the wicked; and another writer talks of God as holding up the wicked in hell with one hand and tormenting them with the other. Now, even when a saint of God speaks like this he sins, and no language can be stern enough to reprobate the manner in which these elder brothers of the prodigal have turned God's gospel of plentiful redemption into anathemas and all but universal perdition.

Which of us has not heard sermons or read books to the effect that if every leaf of the forest's trees and every grain of the ocean's sands stood for billions of years, and all those billions of years were exhausted, you would be no nearer the beginning of eternity than you were at first; and that (pardon me for reproducing what I abhor) if you could conceive of an everlasting toothache, or an endless cautery, or the incessant scream of a sufferer under the knife, that would give you but a faint conception of the agony of hell; and yet, in the same breath, that the majority of mankind are doomed to hell by an absolute predestination? Which of us has not heard teaching which implied, or did not shrink from even stating, this? and dare any one of you regard it as other than blasphemy against the merciful God? If you are not unaffected when the destitute perish of hunger, or the dying agonize in pain, is there any human being worthy of the dignity of a human being who does not revolt and sicken at the notion of a world of worm and flame? Some one, who is not of us, wrote yesterday to the *Times*, how—standing in that Parisian prison where the Girondists held their last supper, whence Danton passed to the scaffold, where Robespierre lay, on the night before his execution, in his blood, where Marie Antoinette poured out her soul on the last evening of her life—he saw an exquisite crucifix of ivory left since she had left it there. That queen and mother had taken to it all night in her last agony. And he then adds that, “in such a scene all logic, doctrine, politics, severity of judgment are hushed and human nature asserts its pre-eminence, and claims the whole field of thought for pity. In presence of that agonizing figure upon the cross, the whole soul revolts against judicial terrorism in whatsoever name, by whatsoever tyrant committed.” He is speaking, of course, of earthly tyrants; but, my brethren, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” And shall the image of the crucified Redeemer inspire in one who rejects His divinity the noble pity which seems as if it were alien to many of His sons? I can at least sympa-

thize with the living poet who cries in contemplation of such thoughts :

“Were it not thus, O King of my salvation,
Many would curse to Thee, and I, for one,
Fling Thee Thy bliss and snatch at Thy damnation,
Scorn and abhor the shining of the sun,
Ring with a reckless shivering of laughter,
Wroth at the woe which Thou hast seen so long,
Question if any recompense hereafter
Waits to atone the intolerable wrong.”

If St. Paul again and again flings from him with a “God forbid” the conclusions of an apparently irresistible logic, we, surely, who have no irresistible logic of any kind against us in this matter, but only in great part spiritual selfishness and impenetrable tradition, do we not, in the high name of the outraged conscience, of humanity—nay, in the far higher name of the God who loves us, of the Saviour who died for us, of the Holy Spirit who enlightens us ; do we not hurl from us representations so cruel of a doctrine so horrible, that every nerve and fibre of our intellectual, moral and spiritual life revolts at it? Ignorance may, if it will, make a fetish of such a doctrine ; Pharisaism may write it broad upon its philacteries ; hatred may inscribe it instead of holiness to the Lord ; instead of all the sacerdotalism in which it simulates and degrades the name of love ; but here in the presence of so many living, and in this vast mausoleum of the glorious dead—here amid the silent memorials of the men of fame and the fathers who begat us, of whom many, though not saints, were yet noble though erring men ; and whom, though they and we alike shall certainly suffer, and suffer bitterly, both here and hereafter, the penalty of unrepented sin, we cannot and will not think of as condemned to unutterable tortures by irreversible decrees. I repudiate these crude and ghastly travesties of the holy and awful will of God. I arraign them as mercilessly ignorant. I impeach them as a falsehood against Christ’s universal and absolute redemption. I denounce them as a blasphemy against God’s exceeding and eternal love. More acceptable, I am very sure, than the rigidest and most uncompromising orthodoxy of all the Pharisees who have ever judged their brethren since time began—more acceptable by far to Him who, on His cross, prayed for His murderers, and who died that we might live—more acceptable, I say, than the delight which, amid a deluge of ruin, hugs the plank on which itself alone is saved, would be the noble and trembling pity which made St. Paul declare himself ready to be anathematized from Christ for the sake of his brethren—which made Moses cry to God at Sinai, “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin ; yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.”

But I would ask you to believe, my brethren, that I speak now not with natural passion, but with most accurate theological precision, when I say that, though texts may be quoted which give *primâ facie* plausibility to such modes of teaching, yet, to say nothing of the fact that the light and love which God Himself has kindled within us recoil from them, those texts are, in the first place, alien to the broad, unifying principles of Scripture; that, in the next place, they are founded on interpretations demonstrably groundless; and, in the third place, that, for every one so quoted, two can be adduced on the other side. There is an old, sensible, admitted rule of theology—“*Theologia parabolica non est demonstrativa*”—in other words, that phrases which belong to metaphor, to imagery, to poetry, to emotion are not to be formulated into necessary dogmas or crystallized into rigid creeds. If this rule be used to test them, nine-tenths of the phrases on which these views are built fall utterly to the ground. But even were it otherwise, once more, in the name of Christian light and Christian liberty—once more, in the name of Christ’s promised Spirit, I protest against the ignorant tyranny of isolated texts, which has ever been the curse of Christian truth, the glory of narrow intellects, and the cause of the worst errors of the worst days of the most corrupted Church. Ignorance has engraved texts upon her sword, and oppression has carved them upon her fetters, and cruelty has tied texts about her faggots; and ignorance again has set knowledge at defiance with texts woven on her flag. Gin-drinking has been defended out of Timothy, and slavery has made a stronghold of the Epistle to Philemon. The devil, you know, can quote Scripture for his purpose, and quoted texts against Christ Himself; and when St. Paul fought the great battle of Christian freedom against the curse of the law, he was anathematized with a whole Pentateuch of texts. But, my brethren, we live under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and our guide is the Scriptures of God in their broad outlines—the revelation of God in its glorious unity, the books of God in their eternal simplicity, read by the illumination of that Spirit of Christ which dwelleth in us except we be reprobates. Our guide is not, and never shall be, what our Saviour called “the letter that killeth”—the tyrannous realism of ambiguous expression, the asserted infallibility of isolated words.

But if this great and awful doctrine of the state of the dead in the future is to be made simply and solely a matter of texts; if, except as a dead anachronism, you do not really mean what you say when you say, “I believe in the Holy Ghost”; if we prefer our sleepy shibboleths and our dead traditions to the living promise, “I will dwell in them and walk in them”—then by all means let this question be decided by texts alone. But then, first, you must go to the inspired original, not to the

erroneous translation ; and, secondly, you must take words and you must interpret words in their proper and historical significance, not in that sense which makes them convey to you a thousand notions which did not originally belong to them. Now, I ask you, my brethren, very solemnly, where would be the popular teachings about hell if we calmly and deliberately erased from our English Bible the three words "damnation," "hell," and "everlasting"? Yet I say unhesitatingly—I say, claiming the fullest right to speak with the authority of knowledge—I say, with the calmest and most unflinching sense of responsibility—I say, standing here, in the sight of God and of my Saviour, and, it may be, of the angels and spirits of the dead, that not one of those words ought to stand any longer in our English Bibles, and that being, in our present acceptance of them, simply mistranslations, they most unquestionably will not stand in the revised version of the Bible if the revisers have understood their duty. The verb "to damn" in the Greek Testament is neither more nor less than the verb "to condemn," and the word translated "damnation," or rather the two words, are simply the words which, in the vast majority of instances, the very same translators have translated, and rightly translated, by "judgment" and "condemnation." The word *αἰώνιος*, translated "everlasting," is simply the word which, in its first sense, means "age-long," and it is, in the Bible itself, applied over and over again to things which have utterly and long since passed away ; and, in its second sense, it is something above and beyond time—something spiritual, as when the knowledge of God is said to have eternal life. So that when, with your futile billions of years, you foist into the word *αἰώνιος* the fiction of an endless time, you do but give the lie to the mighty oath of that great angel who set one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and, with one hand uplifted to heaven, swear, by Him that liveth forever, that time should be no more.

And, finally, the word rendered hell is in one place the Greek word "*Tartarus*," borrowed, as a word, for the prison of evil spirits, not after, but before the resurrection. It is in five places "*hades*," which simply means the world beyond the grave, and it is in twelve places "*gehenna*," which means primarily the Valley of Hinnon outside Jerusalem, in which, after it had been polluted by Moloch worship, corpses were flung and fires were lit ; and, secondly, it is a metaphor, not of final and hopeless, but of that purifying and corrective punishment, which, as we all believe, does await impenitent sin both here and beyond the grave. But, be it solemnly observed, the Jews to whom, and in whose metaphorical sense, the word was used by our blessed Lord, never did, either then or at any period, attach to that word "*gehenna*," which He used, that meaning of endless tor-

ment which we have been taught to apply to hell. To them, and therefore on the lips of our blessed Saviour who addressed it to them, it means not a material and everlasting fire, but an intermediate, a metaphorical and a terminable retribution.

Thus, then, my brethren, finding neither in Scripture nor anywhere anything to prove that the fate of every man is at death irrevocably determined, I shake off the hideous incubus of atrocious conceptions attached by false theology to the doctrine of final retribution. But neither can I dogmatize on the other side. I say nothing to uphold the Romish doctrine of purgatory. I cannot accept the spreading belief in conditional immortality. I cannot preach the certainty of what is called universalism—that is, the view that all will finally be saved. That last doctrine—the belief that good shall fall at last, far off, yet at last, to all—does indeed derive much support from many passages of Scripture; and it, or a view closely analogous to it, was held by Origen, the greatest and noblest; by Gregory of Nyssa, the most fearless; by Clement of Alexandria, the most learned; by Justin, one of the earliest of the fathers. It was spoken of in some places with half approval, and in others with very modified reprobation, by theologians like St. Ambrose, St. Irenæus—even, at his better moments, by that man who has cast so dark a shade over theology, St. Augustine himself; and in modern times, among many others, that doctrine has been held by grand and most orthodox theologians like Bunsen and Tolke among the Germans, and by saints of God among ourselves like Thomas Erskine of Lanathan and Bishop Austin of Argyle. And, further, whatever may have been the motives which influenced them, it is, at any rate, a fact that the Reformers struck out of the Prayer-book that article which originally decreed “All men shall not finally be saved.” I care but little for individual authority in such matters; but thus much is proved, at least by these different theories of wise and holy men: that God has given us no clear and decisive revelation on the final condition of those who have died in sin. It is revealed to us that God is love, and that to know Him is life eternal, and that it is not His will that any should perish; and that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”; but how long, even after death, man may continue to resist His will, how long he may continue in that spiritual death which is alienation from God, that is one of the secret things which God has not revealed. But this much, at any rate, that the fate of man is not finally and irreversibly and necessarily sealed at death, you yourselves—unwittingly, perhaps, but none the less certainly—admit and declare and confess every time you repeat the Apostles’ Creed; for there you say that Christ descended into hell; and the sole passage which proves that article of the Creed is the passage

in which St. Peter tells us that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison who sometimes were disobedient. St. Peter tells you in so many words, in the passage which I have chosen for my text, that the Gospel was preached to them that are dead; and if, as the Church in every age has held, the fate of those dead sinners was not irrevocably fixed by death, then it must be clear and obvious to the very meanest understanding that neither of necessity is ours.

There, then, my brethren, is the sole answer which I can give you to your question, What about the lost? My belief is fixed upon that living God who is the Saviour of all men. My answer is, with Thomas Erskine of Lanathan, that we are lost here as much as there, and that Christ came to seek and to save the lost; and my hope is that the vast majority of the lost will at length be found. If any hardened sinner here, shamefully loving his sin and despising the long-suffering of his Saviour, trifle with that doctrine, it is at his own deep and awful peril. But if, on the other hand, there should be souls among you (and are there not?)—souls very sinful, indeed, but yet not hardened in sin—souls that feel, indeed, that ever amid their failing they long, and pray, and love, and agonize, and strive to creep nearer to the light, then to you I say, Have faith in God. There is hope for you—hope for you even if death overtake you before the final victory is won; hope for the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; hope for the mourners, for they shall be comforted; though you, too, if you should continue in sin, may have to be purified in that gehenna of *αιώνιος* fire beyond the grave. Yes, my brethren, “Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” But say also, as Christ’s own apostles said, that there shall be a restitution of all things, that God willeth not that any should perish, that Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living; that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; and that the day shall come when all things shall be subdued unto Him that God may be all in all.